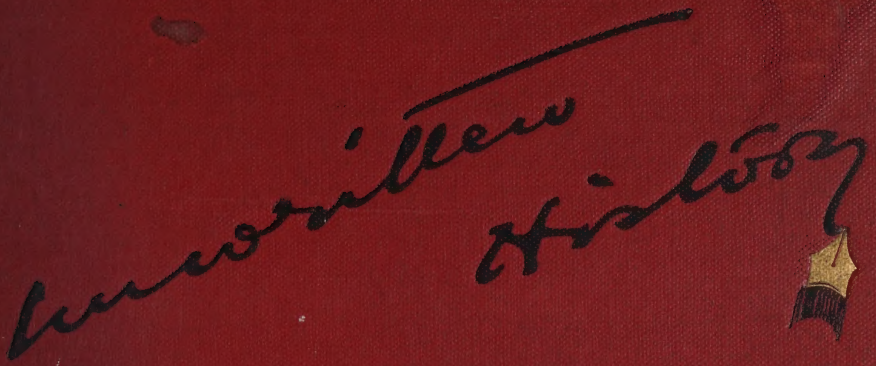

COSMO HAMILTON

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UNWRITTEN HISTORY

By Cosmo Hamilton

THE BLUE ROOM
SCANDAL
WHO CARES?
HIS FRIEND AND HIS WIFE
THE SINS OF THE CHILDREN
THE BLINDNESS OF VIRTUE
THE MIRACLE OF LOVE
THE RUSTLE OF SILK
THE DOOR THAT HAS NO KEY
ANOTHER SCANDAL

Cosmo Hamilton.
In this year of grace.

UNWRITTEN HISTORY

BY

COSMO HAMILTON

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1924

2246
.124

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TO

MY WIFE

In all the histories that have yet to be written, the only two pages that will be of any importance to me and to you are those which will deal with the sayings and the doings of myself and you.

ALI BEN ABOU TALEB

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UNWRITTEN HISTORY

UNWRITTEN HISTORY

CHAPTER ONE

Cacoëthes Scribendi. Parental Advice. At the Authors' Club. Adolescent Conceit. Lily Langtry. Oscar Wilde. "Which Is Absurd." The Autonym Library. Robert Barr and Jerome K. Jerome. Sir Douglas Straight. Mr. Gladstone. "The Wisdom of Folly." Editing the *Sovereign*. On the *World*. William Drummond. Rudyard Kipling. An Adventure in Gold Bricks. The Freedom of the Streets.

I.

With much kindness and affability, they had permitted me to join them in a game of dominoes, and to pay for four rounds of not very old brandy and six quite deadly cigars — the mayor, with an astrakhan beard that was parted in the middle and trained to port and starboard; the gendarme, whose black moustache ran bristling to the very lobes of his ears; and the portly carpenter, who was helping to erect a two-story building on the other side of the street, and who, judging by the leisurely mode of procedure that I had watched from my window, was likely still to be helping in his ripe

old age. This condescension was due to the fact that they had known my father, my brothers and me during our several walking tours through their village of Claire to the sleepy sister villages which nestled round the innumerable old churches in the romantic heart of France. And then, as usual, at nine o'clock, they had risen, bowed, smiled, thanked me for the pleasure of my company, little imagining that it had cost me a good deal more than I could afford, and gone their separate ways to bed.

Already the lights in the charming village, with its fifty-nine homemade bridges across the stream that meandered along the High Street, had gone out, one by one; and the thrifty woman who owned the Hôtel du Chariot d'Or, scraped the bosom of the good red earth all round it for the last atom of its rendering, and had made me very comfortable for a month in the smallest of her three guest bedrooms, for seven francs a day, had blown out all but one of the oil lamps in the *salle à manger*. The composite aroma of garlic, tobacco, kerosene and stock pot gave that small, uncarpeted room its characteristic homeliness to which I had become almost fondly accustomed. Before the quarter had been struck by the mellow bell of the little mother of Claire I and another stray dog were alone upon our feet.

A momentous month, that, to me; a month filled with feverish effort in an atmosphere of paradoxical quietude; a month during which I had deliberately hidden myself from the eyes of my family to pursue what was generally considered to be a forlorn hope, a futile and pathetic effort to prove to my worried, kind but skeptical father that the bad attack of *cacoëthes scribendi* from which I had been suffering through all my adolescence could, should and must bear sufficient fruit to gain his sympathy in the attempt to make a name and a living as a writer of books and plays.

It was, as I see it now, arrant cheek and conceit to have imagined that I was capable of tackling any such adventure; and, with a son of my own growing daily out of his clothes, and approaching with uncanny speed that difficult moment when he in his turn will have to choose the means by which he may earn his bread and butter, it is easy for me to sympathize with my father's attitude. My father was a man with a large family, a delicate wife, an unresilient salary, and his spirit of taking chances had been killed by heavy responsibility, the caution and timidity growing out of a painful knowledge of the risks and difficulties of life, and the undermining security of having sat all his working years in the safe cul-de-sac of a government office. A colleague of Matthew Arnold, who

was only happy when he could disappear from Whitehall, prop himself up in bed against a mass of pillows and concentrate upon his poetry, my father was one of the departmental chiefs of the Board of Education and a leading spirit in the formulation of the code of free education which was given to the people of England during the various parliamentary changes which made the Duke of Devonshire, who dropped all his h's, Lord Lingen, who dropped all his final g's, and others who quickly dropped out of sight, the shifting presidents of his office — an office in which W. S. Gilbert, while serving as a temporary clerk on an infinitesimal salary, devoted the hours which should have been dedicated to an ungrateful country to the writing of the Bab Ballads which led eventually to his brilliant partnership with Sir Arthur Sullivan and the production of all those delightful operas that are even now as much a part of England as the lions in Trafalgar Square, the Lord Mayor's show and the yellow fogs of London.

V. R. was not only stamped on every mat, glass and envelope of my father's office, but on his body and soul as well, and he was as closely tied by red tape to that dull old building next door to the one from which Charles I was conducted to the scaffold as by the heavy chains of Prometheus. He had set his mind, therefore, on my playing safe, on my

utilizing some of the back-stairs influence that could be exerted on my behalf by my grandfather, who was then a queen's messenger, to cross the easy stepping-stones of a conventional career to a placid and respectable harbour of a well-earned pension.

"My dear good lad," he said to me when, having tasted the intoxicating joy of appearing in print as the winner of a guinea prize in a short-story competition in a halfpenny evening paper, I saw myself with Dickens, "one swallow does n't make a summer, one accidental effort, which is very poor at that, does n't mean a career or pay a tailor's bill."

And, with all the eloquence which had made him famous as an after-dinner speaker, he went on to draw a harrowing picture of Chatterton's garret, to describe the well-known hardness of the paving stones of Fleet Street, and to give a series of pitiful examples of the struggle, failure and heartbreak of those friends of his youth who had dared to challenge fate with nothing but a pen, a bottle of ink and the midnight oil that runs so quickly dry.

In spite of all this sanity, and the sage advice that always seems so feeble to the very young, I had gained a short probation after several sad and ineffectual efforts to conform to parental desires. I had buried myself away in the eager determina-

tion to tempt the Muse, to write a book that should make me famous overnight, to win my spurs in the face of all the don'ts of disbelieving parents and the remorseless ridicule of a well-known writer who had asked me to dinner in the Authors' Club for the palpable purpose of choking me off. Ascott Hope was, paradoxically enough, his name; a bearded, brawny Scot, who added substantially to a small but canny income by turning out a charming series of school stories and travel books to a loyal and discriminating public. I shall never forget that evening, and my excitement at sitting at the same long table with Robert Barr, who rolled one cigarette while he smoked another and with each one added a deeper stain of nicotine to his mustache; Conan Doyle, with his massive shoulders and policeman's feet; Jerome K. Jerome, of the ready laugh; and Rider Haggard, with the cavalry face and the jangle of imaginary spurs. Olympian gods, all four, who sat upon Parnassus. Nor its nightmare aftermath, when my most well-meaning host led me into a deserted room, gave me a cigar which made my head whirl round and played strange tricks with my knees, and then used all the eloquence of his misty mountains to show me what an impossible cub I was. I had made up my mind that failure would not lead me into uncongenial safety but to South Africa in the Bechu-

analand police. I had already clicked heels to Col. Hamilton Goold-Adams and the enrollment form was in the pocket of my bag. As a member of a territorial regiment, I had played at soldiering for two years, — a Middlesex Regiment commonly called the Artists' Corps, which afterwards played such a splendid part in the late war, in which my father and one of his brothers, my uncle Charles Hamilton, my cousins C. J. and Geoffrey Hamilton and my eldest brother all served in the same company.

My month had not been fruitless. Morning, noon and night I had glued myself to a little table in the bedroom of the Chariot d'Or, and in the white heat of enthusiasm, the adolescent conceit of private revelation, with ink all over my fingers and probably in my hair, I had turned out a story of forty thousand words designed to blush within the red covers of a famous library in which, among many well-known books, there had appeared "Mademoiselle Ixe", "A Study in Temptations", "Cavalleria Rusticana" and John Oliver Hobbes' "Some Emotions and a Moral." "A man's reach must exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?" The story was laid in India, of which I knew nothing; about the Indian Army, of which I knew even less; and so I had called it "Which Is Absurd" to take the sting away. Under the title

and my name, the name that must be known wherever English readers lived or I busted, from the end of which, in a spirit of youthful independence, I had lopped off my father's patronymic, I had set a Euclidean problem in the following words: "Being as they were, it was quite possible for them to have done otherwise than as they did—which is absurd."

It dealt, naturally enough, with the great riddles of life — men, women and love. It was filled, of course, like all first books, with epigrams and philosophy, and touched with the octogenarian cynicism of callow youth. At midnight it seemed to me to be a masterpiece. At nine o'clock in the morning it bore all the earmarks of egregious nonsense. But the midnight feeling conquered that of nine o'clock, and instead of making a bonfire of all the pages that I had copied and recopied in my best handwriting, I posted the manuscript to the publisher with a note in which I gave him an address in Dieppe and the sort of high recommendation that one reads today on the paper covers of every novel.

I chose Dieppe as my headquarters for the remaining period of my probation because it had a casino, in which, with one of those infallible systems and a certain amount of luck, it seemed to me impossible not to break the bank and return to

London a very rich man. I ought, perhaps, to add the slightly disturbing fact that my capital amounted at that moment to a few shillings short of twenty-five pounds. There, at one of the cheapest of the hotels, filled with the cheapest of English tourists, I settled down to wait for the verdict as to whether I was to become a novelist or a policeman.

It so happened that this pleasant resort harboured at that time another man who was waiting for greatness to be thrust upon him, who was enjoying, incognito — under the name, perhaps, of Mr. Smith — a little respite from the numerous duties that he was called upon to fulfill, and a brief escape from the public searchlight that beats so hotly upon one in his position. His desire to be ignored and permitted to pass unnoticed on his walks was granted very grudgingly by the crowd of English and French, who recognized him instantly and could hardly refrain from demonstrating the love in which they held him in the usual trying way. The blue Guelph eye, the neatly pointed beard, the Monte Carlo hat at a rakish angle, the genial embonpoint, the irresistible charm and urbanity of manner made Mr. Smith conspicuous, whether he was sunning on the end of the pier, strolling along the sea wall with one or another of his friends, standing in the paddock of the rather

comic race course, or sitting next to the bland croupier in the casino for a little flutter at the table. And whenever I caught sight of him in any of these places, wearing the air of a schoolboy playing truant, eager to catch whatever fun there was, I used to remember the vivid description that my grandfather was wont to give of having advised him as a lively boy and lent him a handful of small change from time to time with which to buy a box or two of sweet stuff.

While on the subject of my grandfather, a story has been handed down among the few heirlooms of my family of how he and my grandmother, at a very ripe old age, hired an antiquated four-wheeler, driven by a man even older than the cab, whose horse was a greater age than all of them combined, to pay a Sunday afternoon call in a London square near by. On its funereal way from house to house the bottom fell out of the cab, and as the aged man on the box was too deaf to hear the by no means unviolent expostulations of the hot-tempered old gentleman and the probably high-pitched cries of his small and timid spouse, there was nothing for them to do but to run along inside. The laughter of those who gazed with an abandonment of joy at this most unusual sight must have done much to break the gloom of that early Victorian Sabbath. I tremble to think of the final outburst

that must have thrown the driver out of his seat when the cab drew up at its destination and the blown and helpless prisoners stepped goutily into safety.

II.

My system was undoubtedly infallible, but it let me down to the extent of half my capital after several evenings' play. The loss of every twenty francs nipped off at least two days of my waning and remaining month. With luck unsmiling, and never a word, even of acknowledgment, from the publisher in Paternoster Row, incredible as it seemed, my heart was in my boots. I was on the verge of retiring from the game, when one night a lady with large violet eyes, a skin like the petals of a white rose and a very lovely face looked at me with a smile that seemed to put the lights out, said something to a soldierly man who was standing at her elbow and beckoned to me to come round to her side of the table.

"You ought to be in bed and asleep," she said, "instead of flinging away a fortune in this place." And she smiled again at the remembrance of my timid punting with single francs which had evidently amused her very much. "Never mind; follow me. I'm in luck tonight for a change."

I followed her, not with my usual modest stake, but with the large silver cartwheel that represented

a five-franc piece, and won back all that I had lost and a hundred francs besides. I had n't the remotest idea who this dazzling person was until some time later, when I went to the St. James's Theatre to see my first performance of "As You Like It" and recognized in Mrs. Langtry my lady of succor.

But it was not until many years later, when she did me the honour to come to tea at my rooms in the Albany, Piccadilly, that I had an opportunity to remind her of this incident, which she had completely forgotten, and offer her my thanks. It was then that, in her inimitable way, she told me how it was that Oscar Wilde became the model of Gilbert and Sullivan's æsthetic Bunthorne in "Patience." At the time when Mrs. Langtry was at the zenith of her fame and beauty, Wilde, just out of Dublin University, came to London, poor but proud. He fell in love with the Jersey Lily, as all men did, bought one exquisite blossom every evening at Covent Garden Market, marched across London, holding it in front of him with the amazing absence of self-consciousness that he afterwards parodied so well, waited on the curbstone outside the theatre to open the door of her carriage and then handed his tribute of adoration in silent ecstasy.

For a time there was something rather touching

in the gallantry of this knightly deed, and Mrs. Langtry accepted the inevitable gift from the sallow, large-eyed, long-haired, inarticulate youth with pleasure. But the deadly monotony of these evening presentations, and the regular sight of his worshiping figure looming in the shadows as she left the theatre, got eventually on her nerves, and Wilde was begged to go away. Shocked and wounded, he continued, however, to hang about night after night in the deepest melancholy gloom; until, at last, taking pity on his passionate plight, Mrs. Langtry sent out word that he might renew his wordless attentions and once more allowed herself to be handed out of her carriage by the man who originated the now so popular method of saying it with flowers.

Poverty being the better part of gambling, I presented a cold and cautious shoulder at the casino during the remainder of my holiday at Dieppe. Restless, disheartened and very lonely, hearing nothing but the echo of Hope's keen ridicule in the booming of the sea, I went through one day after another with depression at my heels. I had worked out all my *cacoëthes scribendi* on my first enthusiastic effort. The inkpot stood neglected. Then came that thrilling moment when the longed-for letter came at last, not of mere acknowledgment of the manuscript, and not of

its refusal with thanks, but very briefly desiring a call at the earliest possible moment.

The next boat, London, home; the oiling of an old tall hat, the borrowing of a pair of spats, a hair-cut and general brushing up, and the choice of the smartest hansom cab in which to drive in style to Paternoster Row. A rising blood pressure, a needle sewing through and through the solar plexus, the sun grown twice its size.

But Paternoster Row is the narrowest street on earth; and as wagons have a way of blocking up its passage, the impressive effect of my hansom cab was dissipated in thin air. Paying the callous driver at the corner of St. Paul's Churchyard, who, had he known all that hung upon my mission, might have made a slight reduction in his charge, I walked down the shabby thoroughfare of books, handed my card to an office boy with a brandy ball in his mouth and waited, seeing stars — and waited. The office boy, returning from the great man's room, was only held from suggesting a game of catch with a fat ball of string by my father's snow-white spats. I could see it in his eye. Finally, when every minute detail of that insalubrious outer office had been stamped upon my brain, the exit of the important person, the ring of a bell, "This way, please."

In a large and immediately pleasant room, lined

with bookshelves, with a bowl of flowers on the centre table and many framed photographs of celebrated authors hanging on the walls, was a man in a silver-gray frock-coat suit, with so long and fair a beard, so high and wise a forehead, that he gave me the instant impression of having been sent to earth on behalf of the prophets for the worthy purpose of discovering new writers among the vast obscure. I had never met a publisher before, but Mr. Fisher Unwin fitted exactly into my preconception of one. All about him was the godfather look. He had kindly eyes, fastidious hands, a gentle, semi-humorous dignity. He might have filled the rôle of Santa Claus — and how intensely I hoped he would to me!

"Good God!" he said as I walked in; which, curiously enough, sent my spirits up. And when I asked him why, he Un-winned quickly, hid his first astonishment at what I suppose was my juvenile appearance, and struck several shrewd blows at my sudden confidence. And when at last I managed to ask him what he thought of "Which Is Absurd", he burst out laughing and tapped the manuscript with his fingers.

"Odd," he said; "very odd. Sentimental cynicism. Naïve, sophisticated, flippant, ingenuous, unconventional. Distinctly clever — and now that I see you, too clever, rather dangerously

clever. In fact precocious. Still, what do you want for it?"

I very nearly stood on my head, waved my spatted feet and sang through my sobs. I asked for an enormous sum — a hundred pounds or so. A gift at that, I thought, ignorant of prices. I had seen where Kipling lived. And then followed a further process of Un-winning and a final cash offer of ten pounds for the lot. To be in the Autonym Library was very well worth the rest. Ten pounds for all that work! No wonder my father had talked of garrets, frayed shirt cuffs and trodden-down heels. I asked for time, made an appointment for tomorrow, and with mingled feelings of triumph and disappointment tore round to the rooms in Clifford's Inn of a friend of a friend who drove the pen for bread.

Sitting amidst a scatter of proof sheets like a cook who had plucked a goose, this man was kind enough to hear my tale.

"What? The Autonym Library? A chance to be published in the Autonym Library, with the reflected glory of its famous list and the certainty of quick press notices in all the papers? Give him the damn thing, you lucky devil; make him a handsome present of it, and thank your stars for something I'd eat my hat to get." But I took the ten-pound note with humble gratitude.

My father's astonishment was tempered with wisdom. It was true that I had achieved the impossible; but before I could call myself a member of the literary profession it might be wise to see how the book was received, and all that. While waiting for an event of which the unexpectant public was kept, it seemed to me, lamentably unaware, I ran through several bottles of the blackest writing ink. Knowing nothing of the difficult art of dramaturgy, as Max Beerbohm loved to call it in his gorgeous snuffbox way, I seized on a book of Robert Barr's, "The Countess Tekla", made a four-act play of it, with three scenes in every act, an enormous list of characters, battlements, drawbridges, double-handed swords, lords, ladies, pages, soldiers and, I am very much afraid, a jester; and, feeling certain that he would love to hear me read it, asked fearlessly for an appointment. In the letter in which I broke the glad news I touched quite lightly on the fact that the new volume of the Autonym Library was by most sincerely yours. I was invited to lunch at the Devonshire Club, received absolution for having broken one of the laws of literary etiquette by touching another man's novel without permission; and, after pecking at an admirable lunch in a state as flat as a pancake, was taken upstairs to a quiet room with the thick roll which was written

on the glossy sheets of government-office paper that I had lifted from my father's desk.

"There is n't a play in this novel, anyhow," grumbled Barr; "that I know for a fact. However, you 'd better get it off your chest."

From the moment that I made a start to do this thing the bearded parent of that outraged book, wearing a baggy suit of thick brown tweeds, prowled all over the room like a restless grizzly bear, followed by a constant cloud of smoke. Every now and then he stopped for a moment, whether in horror or in order to light another of his homemade cigarettes I could n't possibly tell. With my eyes glued to the pages, I read and read and read. He growled occasionally, chuckled once or twice, cursed a waiter who poked his head into the room, and by the time that I was leading up to the final scene was going round and round my chair like a squirrel in a cage.

"Curtain," I said, and looked up giddily, expecting to be flung downstairs.

"Better than Shakespeare!" shouted Barr, hauling me to my feet and waltzing me about the room.

He knew as little about plays as I did; but I agreed with him, and swam home through what appeared to be champagne. He worked over this exciting effort for a fortnight; and just as it was

about to be placed with George Alexa
duction in London by an agent in his
sent me a telegram to say that he had arra
it to be done by Edward Compton in the P
provinces. He had hired a dog and barked
self and ruined a magnificent chance. The re
headed father of Compton Mackenzie and Fay
Compton was, however, a sterling actor who had played the old comedies with his own most excellent company for years; and, after he had cut out a dozen superfluous characters and several unnecessary scenes, a castle or two, a fight in which I had made provision for at least a hundred men, and altered the title to "The Emperor's Romance" — because he, after all, was the star — the play opened in a distant town and ran about the country for a year. I never saw it played. I disagreed with the drastic treatment it had undergone and shuddered at the wholesale sacrifice of my fighting men. But it brought in enough money to take me into rooms. In spite of all temptations, I was a writing man.

Was I? Everything that I wrote under the stimulation of this success came back to roost like homing pigeons; articles, short stories, sonnets — everything. And I descended from the crowded dining-room of a tenth-rate London club to eat my scanty dinner in an A. B. C. tea shop, whose

ands got no further into the alphabet
, and my supper at a coffee stall which
an open space beneath the gargoyles of
minster Abbey. A superior egg was two-
ce, a cup of burning liquid, which had stood
ar coffee, was twopence, and an attenuated
packet of obnoxious cigarettes almost killed one for a penny. But there were good evenings when I dined at home, guarding my appetite so that there should be no suspicion of my Chattertonian plight; and others, even better than those, when I drew up my chair to the hospitable tables of my father's friends.

The appearance of my masterpiece, with the author's pristine copies of which I sat up all one night, reading all six from cover to cover with tingling blood, brought me better luck. On the strength of the reputation of the library whose name it bore, it was reviewed at once in most of the papers, and either kicked or praised. The critics who were amused by its juvenile satire, its beardless cynicism, its twisted sentiment, its cheap cleverness and its Gallic flippancy, said so, with quotations. The others, whom it worked into a condition of volcanic irritation, said so, too — though, fortunately, at length. If I did n't wake to find myself famous, I woke, at any rate, in a blaze of publicity.

"Who is Cosmo H
asked, and answ
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me frequently to the lobby of the House of Commons, to the theatres, exhibitions, concerts, and who knows what besides. It thrilled me very much to watch and study the ways and manners of Gladstone, Asquith, Harcourt, Haldane, Dilke, Balfour, St. John Brodrick, Chamberlain, with his inevitable orchid, Churchill, the obstreperous members of the Irish Party, Burns, the first of the Labour men, with his bowler hat, and the early and more earnest Lloyd George.

It was then that I began to indulge in the pernicious habit of drawing caricatures; and I shall never forget an uncomfortable incident which occurred one afternoon when Mr. Gladstone stood in the outer lobby among a group of worshiping constituents and directed his old but eagle eye at me. I had just finished putting his leonine head upon the body of a hungry-looking cat when he marched down upon me and held out his wrinkled hand. I sprang to my feet, wishing that I had been born with the gift of physical dissolution, and handed over my book.

"Very feeble," he said distinctly, and gave it back to me; whereupon I knew how the unfortunate Admiral Maxse must have felt when Queen Victoria commanded that he should give his well-known imitation of her august self, watched him put a handkerchief on his head, sink his chin and

blow out his cheeks, said in her iciest tone, "We are not amused," and left him worse than dead.

I was not permitted to go into the Press Gallery of the House except during the two or three times when I deviled for the *Parliamentary Observer* of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Being new to the proceedings, and not utterly bored and blasé like the older men up there, who looked upon all the leaders of the political game as a band of cynical and frankly selfish actors striving without the smallest loyalty and patriotic sense to force themselves to the centre of the stage and stick there at all costs, I found it as good as any play I ever saw, though the dialogue was not so witty as it was in some. To look down from the gallery and see the utter indifference of all those men who, unless a crisis made them sit up straight, lolled and flopped on the benches, yawning, cracking jokes through the debates and leaving the place whenever they could, was vastly amusing to one who liked to look behind the scenes. Mr. Balfour's usual attitude, with his head bent forward, his back flat upon the bench, his long legs stuck out in front of him and his hygienic shoes resting on the table which held the mace; Mr. Asquith, often fast asleep, with his head on anybody's shoulder; Mr. Chamberlain, trying to keep the creases from his trousers — were, of course, the subjects for many and frequent

pencils. The present Lord Dalziel was a private member then — a tall, untidy Scot, with a queer sense of humour and a shrewd head for business, and pockets bulging with newspapers that he wanted to buy or sell. So were many others who have since been shuffled into the House of Lords, either as a reward for services or to get them out of mischief. Parliament is a more curious place than ever it was, with the Labour Party in such devastating numbers.

III.

My second full-length play, called "The Wisdom of Folly" — being three exciting days in the otherwise peaceful life of a fluffy-minded woman — was written about this time; and, after the usual disheartening adventures through which such tyroic efforts go, it fell into the hands of Charles Cartwright, the well-known actor, who was directing the productions of Miss Gertrude Kingston at the Comedy Theatre. Her season had not been successful. Two plays had failed to attract. Her backing had been severely strained. In my Mrs. William Allen Richardson Rose, Cartwright saw a very fat part for the worried and charming lady, who must change her bill at once in order to tempt the public again. He urged acceptance of my play, won his point, and read it so delightfully

to the distinguished company in a little back room of the theatre that all our hopes ran high.

With Charles Groves as a retired admiral, J. H. Brewer as a retired colonel, Holman Clark as a retired civil servant, Frank Kemble Cooper as an active solicitor, Ada Ferrar as a spinster maid, Barrington Foote and Lily Grundy, the daughter of Sydney Grundy, the dramatist, as the two young self-conscious people, and Gertrude Kingston as the fluffy-minded woman, it went into instant rehearsal; and if any play had a chance to draw the fickle playgoer, that one had. What a cast, what enthusiasm! The rehearsals were delightful, and it is altogether beyond me to describe the amazing thrill that I received on seeing my characters brought to life by those admirable actors. Miss Kingston's kindness to me still warms my heart.

On the first night, not daring to go near the theatre, I wandered about the streets in an agony of apprehension; and when, drawn like a needle to a magnet, I went to the front of the house at the moment when I thought that the verdict must have been passed, a critic, whom I knew very slightly, rushed out in advance of the audience, caught sight of my sea-green face, called out "Damned good in parts, damned bad in parts," and went off at a run to his office.

My father, who had seen the play that night,

gave me supper at his club, and with roars of laughter, not wholly mirthful, accused "you young devil" of having put him on the stage in the person of Shand-Shand, the civil servant, which I honestly and strenuously denied. I had made use, of course, of certain characteristic Whitehall shibboleths on which I had been brought up; but the pompous bewhiskered person whom I had drawn with a malicious touch of caricature bore no more resemblance to my father, for whom I had the greatest love and admiration, than a turkey buzzard to a grey-hound. The poor little play, written in high spirits and the most youthful sense of satire, was accused by the *Daily Telegraph* of being stamped with the most poisonous cynicism, lingered for two anæmic weeks and faded away, sending Miss Gertrude Kingston to the hospital, me to the country to lick my wounds and her company back to the Green Room Club. The failure of the play did nothing to weaken Cartwright's faith in me, and he commissioned me to write another and this I did. It was called "The Proud Laird" and was produced in course of time in New York by Mr. Fiske, with Robert Lorraine and Dorothy Donnelly in the leading parts at the fag end of the season. Like everything beloved of the gods it died young, I regret to say.

Once again in town, with a renewal of optimism

and a coat of sunburn, I was asked by a rash man whose name I forget to edit a weekly paper called, for no earthly reason that I could discover, the *Sovereign*. I found upon entering the office of this quite superfluous and entirely bloodless joke that I had been engaged not only to occupy the editorial chair but those of all the staff as well. Like the pathetic desperado in one of Gilbert's ballads, I was the cook and the captain bold, and the mate of the Nancy brig, the bo'sun tight and the midshipmite and the crew of the captain's gig, brave boys, the crew of the captain's gig. I had a very jolly and a rather strenuous time — while it lasted. I wrote the editorials in the pompous manner of all such things, went for the Irish Party tooth and nail in the most approved Tory fashion, dashed off many highly libelous attacks on David Lloyd George, which he never saw or heard about, and printed what I liked about plays, books, music, art, religion, science, finance, men, women and morons.

It was a curious position; rather like that, it seemed to me, of a man appointed to rule the non-existent inhabitants of a deserted island. Mine was, indeed, a voice crying in the wilderness. But I did have one eager reader — the proprietor — who admired my work extremely, I was thankful to say, until the strain upon his purse became

quite unbearable and the *Sovereign* was laid to rest without any of the pomp and solemnity that usually goes with a royal demise. I made one excellent discovery, however, in the person of W. H. Haselton, a maker of humorous drawings, who ever since then has twisted the grave mouths of the Trafalgar Square lions into a regular morning grin.

Back once more into a less unearthly atmosphere, I took it into my head to write for the *World*, for a change. At that time the weekly society journal, started by Edmund Yates about thirty years before, contributed to under his flamboyant editorship, which led him into jail for libel, by Dickens and Thackeray and most of the big guns of those days, was in the hands of William Archer as dramatic critic, Lady Jeune as the anonymous Belle of the famous letters, Lady Colin Campbell as a genial observer of pleasant follies, Robert Hichens as the dialoguist, Frank H. Hill, former editor of the *Daily News*, as the oracle of its politics, Richard Dehan as one of the mainstays of the fiction end, the brilliant and erratic Mostyn T. Pigott as the incessant provider of *vers de société*, with W. S. Bullock writing from Germany, and many other first-rate pens, occupying as much space as they cared to fill on any subject that took their fancy. In other words, the

paper was being edited by the contributors, and not, in the customary manner, by the admiral on the poop.

This placid, gentle, charming, happy-go-lucky person was William Drummond, who wore frogs on what was a cross between a smoking jacket and a frock coat, which gave him the appearance of the conductor of a casino orchestra or the station master of a Swiss railway line. Instead of emulating the conscientious Atlas, who bore the world upon his shoulders, Drummond sat on top of it with a beaming smile and dangled his legs over the side. Without taking the trouble to achieve an introduction to him, which was foolish, I sent him a so-called satirical dialogue every Monday for a year. But, you see, he had a dialoguist already, with whom he was perfectly pleased, and so these things came back to me with the regularity of clockwork and a printed slip of thanks and apology for refusal. New blood? But why, when the old blood circulated at normal pressure?

A little tired of this monotonous game, I tried my hand at a short story, designed to add an extra beat to Mr. Drummond's pulse. In this I made two ill-mated husbands perform an exchange of wives. It was a tragic story, a little too daring perhaps, but not without a note of ecstasy. Its effect was precisely the one that I had done my

best to achieve. I received a courteous though perfectly steady letter, asking me to be so kind as to call at York Street, Covent Garden, the following Wednesday afternoon. At the end of a very pleasant interview, during which I was informed that my story would be accepted with pleasure if I would consent to make a slight alteration in its last three lines, the Elizabethan Mr. Drummond asked me a question that completely winded me:

"Have you ever, by the way, tried your hand at writing dialogues?"

In a flash I saw a pile of fifty-two refusals on a bookshelf by my desk which obviously he had never had. The elbow grease! The heartbreak! It was on the tip of my tongue to confess that I had bombarded him with dialogues with a tragic persistence which had broken down at last. But, with a touch of diplomacy, inherited presumably from my grandfather, I answered the question with another:

"Would you like me to see what I can do?"

The result was the sending back of every blessed one of my neglected efforts and a great many more besides. The "C. H." under my first year's contributions were generally supposed to be the initials of Charles Hawtrey. No one suspected the inconspicuous author of the play that had put

Miss Kingston into bed. I was, however, the first writer eventually to have his name signed in the columns of the *World*. Imagination boggles at such a revolution! When, finally, I sprang my joke on Mr. Drummond in a burst of careless confidence the corners of his gentle mouth curled into a smile, and he said, "That 's very amusing, indeed."

For several weeks I had been trying to screw up sufficient courage to write to Rudyard Kipling to ask if I might be permitted to dramatize his "The Story of the Gadsbys", and at last I ventured to do so, with little hope of gaining my eagerly desired point. By return of post, to my infinite joy and amazement, I received a card telling me, in the small, neat writing of the man I worshiped from afar, that if I was so keen to have a shot at what he himself had several times failed to make any sort of job of, I was at perfect liberty to do so.

"I 'm off to South Africa at the end of the month and if you can get it done by then let me see it before I sail."

I did get it done by then with the aid of midnight oil and daily concentration broken only by the necessity to eat. It was a labour of love, because Kipling was then, and is still, in my estimation, the master, the giant of the pen, who has done

more magical things with the English language, especially in his short stories and in "Kim", than any living man.

In the process of dramatization it was necessary, as it nearly always is, to take certain liberties with the original story, to introduce new people, to focus upon a main theme, and to make one of the characters the pivot of the play. I made Gadsby the leading part — dear old heavy-footed Gadsby, who remained a bachelor even after his wedding bells had frightened him to death. It was with the most painful trepidation, therefore, that I sent off the finished play to Kipling and in the most deadly funk that I waited for the verdict.

His card was stolen by an autograph hunter, the most unscrupulous of men, and so unfortunately I cannot quote it here. It was to the effect, however, in the kindest words, that I had done the trick, that it met with his absolute approval and that I could go ahead and get it placed. "Good luck; R. K." It was accepted by the first of the managers to whom it was sent — Frederick Harrison and Cyril Maude of the Haymarket Theatre — and shortly after his arrival in South Africa, to stay with Cecil Rhodes, 50 per cent of the preliminary payment, which was not half so bad, at that, dropped out of his agent's envelope on Kipling's breakfast table.

But that 's another story.

The best laid schemes of mice and literary men gang aft agley, and by a most unfortunate chance I came under the blue eye and open blandness of a financial shark at this encouraging period of my inky struggle, which almost landed me in jail. How true it is that a carpenter should never attempt to manipulate the wires of an electrician, or an electrician attempt to solve the mysteries of a saw. A short, ingenuous and trust-inspiring man, with the face of a philanthropist and the cooing of a dove, came suddenly into my innocent and sometimes sedentary life. I 've never been able to fathom why he picked on me, and, out of all the crowd, marked me out for wealth. It was, perhaps, because I happened to be able to say "How do you do?" to an ex-governor-general and exchange the time of day with an earl, both these feats being strangely irregular on the part of a literary gent. Be that as it may, he astonished and confused me very much one sunny day by saying that he had appointed me to a seat on the board of directors of a high-sounding company for the exploration of the gold, silver, copper, oil, steel, iron and nitrates from large portions of this earth. It carried a salary of six hundred pounds a year and nothing to do but sign my name. It was a dream, a chimera, one of the many things

which seem too good to be true. But it was true, as I quickly saw, when I was taken to a suite of palatial offices in Trafalgar Square and stood gaping at the specimens of the company's richness reposing in glass cases round the walls.

When it turned out that I was the only director out of a yet-to-be-landed eight, and that the company had still to be provided with a large capital by a public none too anxious to buy gold bricks, I ought to have resigned with dignity and taken to my heels. It is easy to be wise after the event and pick the winner when the race is run. I was a babe in business, and an optimist. Then, too, my new-found friend read the lessons every Sunday in his church.

The governor-general and the earl, as, of course, you will have guessed, were the next to grace the board, at which eventually there also sat a duke and several members of Parliament. All went well — though with, I am bound to confess, several Gilbert-and-Sullivan moments, such as those during which two or three of us, gathered together, signed documents which might have been written in Zulu so far as we could make them out, and those when my leg was pulled by my friends and I received an anonymous letter from A Well-Wisher pointing out that guinea pigs, as directors of companies had come to be named, sometimes

wound up not in sties but prisons — until the day the company went to allotment, when, for the first time, the directors had the pleasure of making one another's acquaintance en bloc. Great excitement under the most phlegmatic attitudes. Hundreds of thousands of pounds were expected to roll in on top of a booming press campaign.

At four o'clock in the afternoon the lists were closed, the secretary entered the board room with the spoils, and the promoter withdrew, as etiquette apparently demanded, to be informed of the fact that we had gone to allotment greatly oversubscribed, as he intended in any case to announce. There were notices to that effect on the table all ready to be sent to the papers.

It would take a better pen than mine to describe the expressions of amazement that settled on the faces of the governor-general, the duke, the earl and the members of Parliament when the secretary announced the total of the checks received, a total at least four hundred and eighty-five thousand pounds short of the capital asked for. Even the somnolent governor-general woke completely up at this. It was then that, with the nasty remarks of my well-wisher ringing in my ears, I locked the board-room door, to the rage and imprecations of our philanthropic financial friend, who hammered a devil's tattoo, and moved a hasty reso-

lution. It must have been most eloquently expressed, because, well within an hour, the checks were all ready to be posted back to their gullible dispatchers and our formal resignations had been duly entered in the minutes. A quiet and rather pale procession of men, who felt that they had escaped from the unpleasant charge of fraud by the skin of the teeth, then wound its way downstairs, followed by an astounding outpouring of Billingsgate from the bland and blue-eyed gentleman who read the lessons in his church on Sabbath mornings. Whereupon, breathing rather quickly and with somewhat mirthless laughs, the earl and I sought the Carlton bar and drank to honest poverty and the freedom of the streets.

CHAPTER TWO

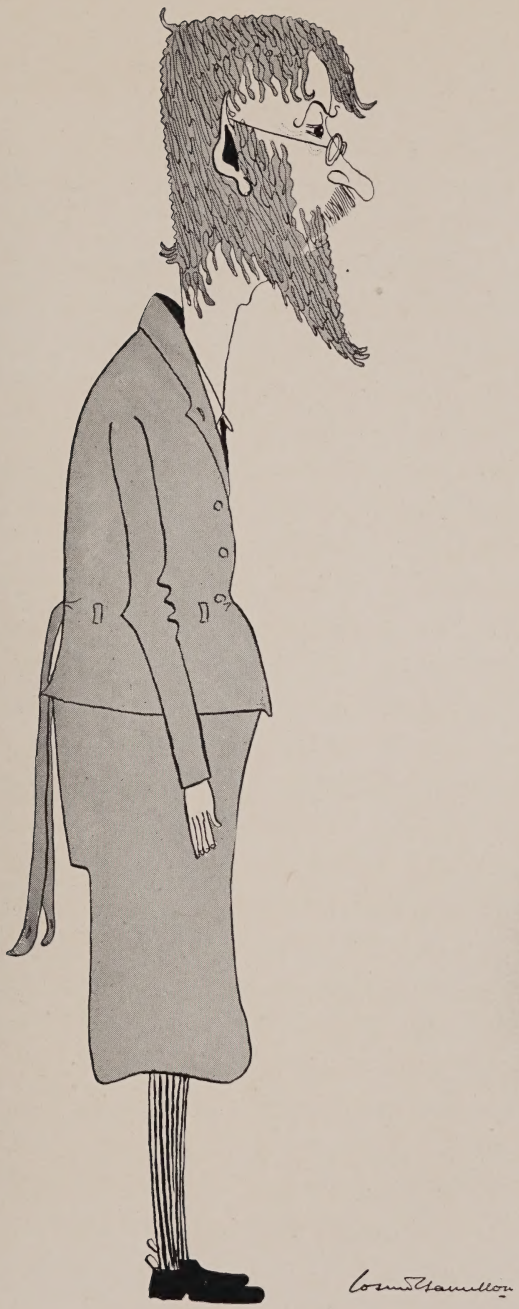
The Hand of Jonah. George Bernard Shaw. The Seagulls' Rest. A Meeting of Creditors. Charles Frohman. "The Catch of the Season." Seymour Hicks. "The Belle of Mayfair." Charles Brookfield and Leslie Stuart. "A Sense of Humour." Comyns Carr. "The Mountain Climber." "Adam's Clay." Sir George Hutchinson.

I.

It is, I think, pretty generally agreed that Jonah exercises an unhappy influence over certain men, women and ships. It is difficult otherwise to account for the persistent bad luck that dogs the heels of the particular members of this trio who strike all the rocks that others miss and bring a series of eager efforts to an end among the flotsam and jetsam of a restless tide. We have all known that most unlucky man, honest sometimes, but always far more winning than the general run, whose distant swans approach invariably as geese, whose absolute certainties are always to be found among the also-rans, and whose hundredth visit for the purpose of another touch brings forth the agonized cry that he may be sent away because his tragic story breaks one's heart.

There are certain houses, too, deceptively pleasant houses, apparently worthy of all the stilted praise of auctioneering words, in which the most devoted couples never can agree, the most admirable servants go hopelessly to seed, and the nicest children run the gamut of complaints. Also there are theatres in nearly every city whose histories show a record of deplorable fiascos for the more and more obvious reason that they live under the hoodoo of Jonah's malignant hand. With one of these, built on the draughty corner of Northumberland Avenue, blurred by the mists that rose up from the Thames and shaken by the rush of trains that passed out from, and duly returned to, Charing Cross, I was briefly but expensively connected in the good old days. It was called the Avenue Theatre, but if it had been known by any other name it would have smelt as dank. George Bernard Shaw's first play, "Arms and the Man", was produced under its melancholy roof, and after sending a momentary shudder down the mid-Victorian spine slipped into the limbo of forgotten things. At a time when Shaw had burst into the full glory of intellectual favour and become a cult, — the volatile, garrulous, explosive G. B. S., happiest of men, greatest of living Christians, and most astounding of dramatists, — this sly and witty play came into its own among the more mature

but not more delightful "Man and Superman", "Major Barbara", "Candida", "The Devil's Disciple", "John Bull's Other Island" and the rest. Not so much, perhaps, because it was small and cheap to run, as because it stood in the very heart of the respectability that the ever-green Irishman took such a diabolical joy in jarring, the Court Theatre in Sloane Square was chosen as the Shavian shrine, and it was there, as all earnest students of the drama are well aware, that, with the devoted assistance of the business-like Vedrenne and the apostle Barker, who, although he shaved, became more and more like Shaw, the Master waved his magic wand and did more to undermine the constitution of Great Britain than any other subtle force before the war. Like a naughty god sent down from the Elysian Fields for the destruction of all ancient shibboleths, Shaw thoroughly enjoyed himself in this little theatre, going from play to play with the gorgeous effervescence which is occasioned only by Irish fermentation, a process which causes the extrication of an aëriform fluid as in the mixture of an acid with a carbonated alkali. He chose his actors, designed his scenery, directed his director, pressed his press agent and, after the course of all rehearsals, dashed off letters of the most charming abuse and the most impertinent criticism to the members of his cast. Always



George Bernard Shaw.
With both eyes on posterity.

in the highest spirits and the strangest clothes, that might quite easily have been made at home, bilious in colour, and in pattern vegetarian like his diet, his red hair and beard crackling with electricity, his quick wits sparkling like running water in the sun, he was then, in middle age, the *enfant terrible* of London, who put his fingers to his nose at all the stodgy critics, brought down the Albert Memorial with a gibe, and broke out in torrential diatribes against the dear hypocrisies of that hitherto unstartled time. He ran a sort of intellectual cocoanut shy in which he flung his devastating missives not at the hairy succulent fruit that was so convenient to the Swiss Family Robinson, but at the outraged heads of politics and religion, art and science, medicine and moonshine, society and snobbery, everything and everybody. He knew every line of all his work by heart, and woe betide the type of slipshod actor who dropped a word or stumbled on a comma. And if any American manager, unable to break his emasculating habit of cutting dialogue and transplanting scenes, ventured to use the blue-pencil upon his sacred manuscript the cables burned with scorn and anger and the play was instantly withdrawn. No other playwright since the world began has had all his own way like Bernard Shaw, been so well served under such delightful condi-

tions or placed so many volumes on the bookshelves of posterity, with the possible exception of Shakespeare, his only rival. When the under dogs of the world as we know it, assisted by the housebreaking communists and socialists ignorant of the inexorable laws of heredity, have brought about the downfall of this civilization, as they are bound to do, the Theatre Guilds of the new civilization will inevitably mislead their audiences in 2924 as to the people and the thought of today and yesterday with Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant by G. B. S.

Returning to the matter of the theatre, which, I now remember, had another name, "The Seagull's Rest", a six months' lease had been entered into by a young adventurous actress, backed, as she had thought, by a little syndicate. Among a company of first-rate actors who were gathered together to interpret a rather feeble play, there was the ubiquitous Earl of Rosslyn, who had gone upon the stage as "James Erskine" while he recovered from his various heroic attempts to break the bank at Monte Carlo. The hoodoo on the theatre, the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the critics, and the backing away of the backers after the cold first night brought this venture very quickly to the ground. My wife, Beryl Faber, who was the actress, and as good an actress as she

was a beautiful girl, had undertaken the responsibilities of this season with little knowledge of theatrical business, and a childlike faith in human nature. The shock of finding herself left high and dry with a six months' contract and all the bills for the abortive play brought about a nervous breakdown and the very natural threat of bankruptcy. The former misfortune was for her doctor to put right; the latter was a problem with which, of course, I had to grapple. And so, very anxious on these two counts and with nothing much to make a rattle in my pockets except a bunch of keys, I called a meeting of the creditors and spoke them fair. I asked for two things, — time and confidence. Such was the ugly total of this indebtedness that the period of time could not be fixed. There were moments, indeed, when, in spite of the precious gift of optimism, without which life is hardly worth the chance, I saw myself staggering into old age with this burden on my back. The possibility of being paid in full, even if the dividends were tiny, appealed to dressmakers, scene-makers, bill-posters, the theatre owner and the cast. There was a shaking of hands, an air of friendliness, one or two polite expressions of sympathy, the introduction of my lawyer, and a parting, all on a sunny day. Frank Curzon, the lessee of the theatre, was immensely kind. And

I went home and started on a book. I gave it an appropriate title — "Adam's Clay."

Home consisted of a very charming Queen Anne house with ghost and powder closets, hoofmarks on the stairs, a large and airy den which once had been a kitchen, yew trees, ancient barns and gardens, orchards and a tennis court, a dog, a horse or two and pigeons. It once had been the property of the Macready family, known to fame by at least two of its members, — the great actor, and the gallant general who added distinction to his name and division in the war. Later I made it the house in which "the Reverend Harry Pemberton" enacted the scenes of a play of mine, "The Blindness of Virtue", which gave me an excuse to visit America in 1912.

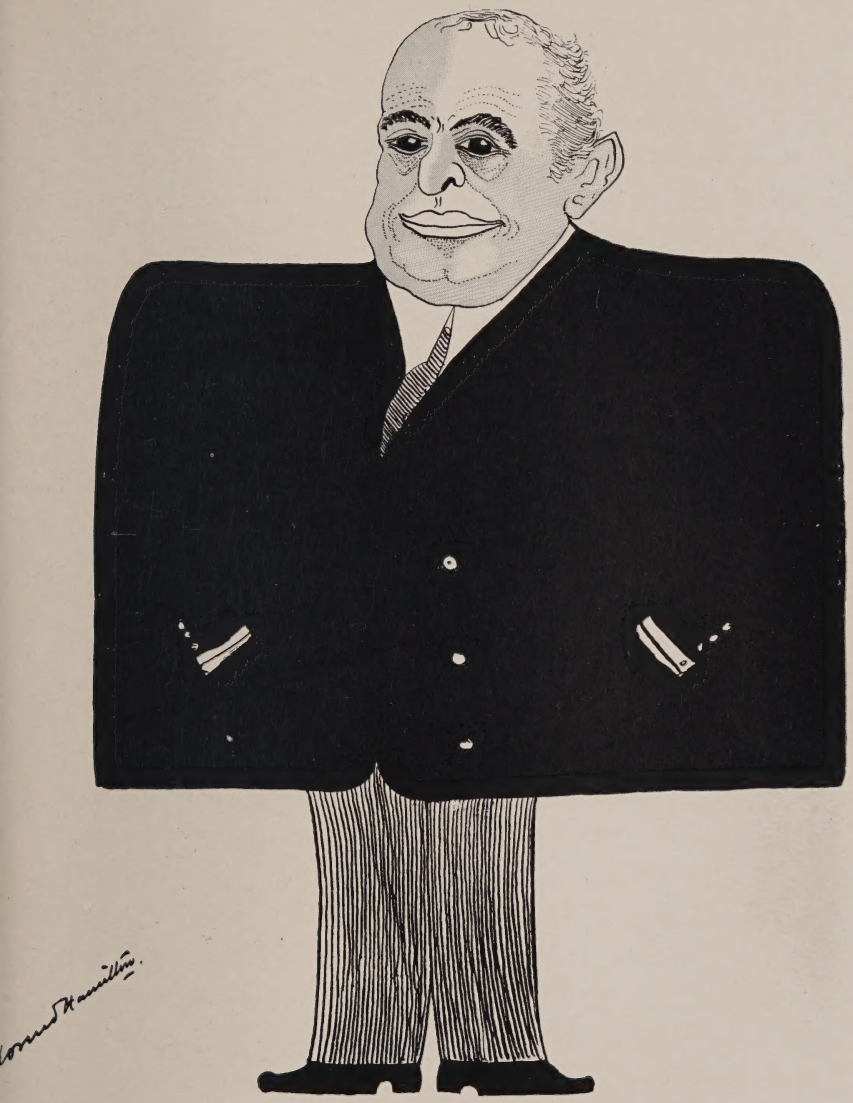
It was after I had written the first chapter of the novel with which I hoped to pay a halfpenny in the pound that I went out to the garden to stretch my legs. With a keen appreciation of what I imagined must have been the aching back of Atlas, I wandered round to the front of the house and leaned a little heavily on the gate. Under the long and lovely twilight of an English evening I could see the village green. To the soft anthems of a choir of countless birds three elderly horses fed, their day's work done. A bevy of boys played cricket in the fading light, with shrill shouts.

One after another a party of crows flapped heavily homeward, very black against a cloudless sky. The chimney of a brewery shot out from among the roofs of cottages that straggled round the borders of the green. Oil lamps flickered in the windows of a shop or two and above the doors of three inns. A company of sturdy field girls stumped in single file, or in couples, along the narrow path, singing softly through their noses, and in their patches of front garden weary women stood, bareheaded, circulating gossip. A string of market carts, loaded with cabbages, made its way heavily towards London, and over all was God. "Give us strength and courage, Father, patience and hope."

I saw a telegraph boy emerge from the ancient post office and wander up the road. And as I watched him stop to judge the game of cricket, turn off for an exchange of Middlesex with a lad as small as himself, and invent a thousand excuses by which he might delay the delivery of his message, I had so strong a premonition of impending help that the straps about my shoulders eased and loosened and the weight I carried seemed to slip away and fall. With a definite sense of certainty that the boy's telegram was for me, and that it contained something that would round my corner, I waited, without impatience, while he made up his mind finally to approach. I opened the brick-

red envelope and the message that it contained was this: "Kindly see me tomorrow twelve o'clock Savoy Hotel Charles Frohman." When it is remembered that at that time the words "Charles Frohman presents" were on the bills of many of the London theatres, and that I wrote plays, the deep significance of this command needs no interpretation. I spent the night with dreams.

Big Ben boomed twelve as I was conducted to the Frohman suite, and in the easily recognized Savoy sitting room overlooking the sluggish Thames two men did not seem to be enjoying a serious talk. The sun was shining but the electric lights were on and there was a large bottle of iced spring water on the sideboard. One man was very spruce and soldierly, but with a rather rounded back; mustached and spatted, hair gleaming with Ajax, well-boned shoes, a well-cut nose and chin. I knew him for Captain Robert Marshall, author of "The Second in Command", "The Lord Lieutenant", "The Duke of Killicrankie" and other most successful plays. The other sat on his legs like a mandarin, with twinkling eyes, full lips, a double chin, fine thin hair, small white hands, padded shoulders and a huge cigar. "How are you?" said Marshall, rising. "I spoke to Mr. Frohman about you yesterday. Let me introduce you now." Two searching eyes



CHARLES FROHMAN.
"Come right in."

all over me taking an X-ray picture, a smile, a murmur, a half shy hand. Captain Marshall began to talk. Lightly, but with an underlying uneasiness, he explained that he had been commissioned by Mr. Frohman to write a comedy with music for Seymour Hicks and Ellaline Terris for production, as quickly as possible, at the Vaudeville Theatre. Two months ago he had gone off to Monte Carlo for inspiration, had missed one and come back empty-handed, barren of ideas. The position was really a little serious as the piece in which Hicks and his charming wife were appearing had run beyond its course. A successor was urgently needed, a collaborator had been suggested, and as he, Marshall, liked my work and especially the dialogues in the *World*, would I join him in writing the much desired play? In other words, would I, Hamilton, young and fairly prolific, do what Monte Carlo had n't achieved, supply Marshall with an inspiration, and under the patronage of a temporarily idealess brain, do all the work that was required to complete the commission and save the day? No, I would n't, but I did n't say it like that. I shied at collaboration, though I was highly flattered at the thought; I was just beginning a novel which, in addition to my regular weekly work, kept my nose to the grindstone; and when, eventually, Marshall left, none too

pleased, I am afraid, at my intractable attitude, I was asked by Charles Frohman, to whom a hint was infinitely better than a nod, if I would undertake the job myself. Would I? . . . I had never imagined the possibility of my writing a play with music and knew very little of the sort of thing that suited Seymour Hicks. Under any other circumstances I should have confessed my absolute inability, shied again and gone. But all those bills had to be paid somehow and a speedy dividend, however small, would prove my good intentions. . . . Would I not! How soon must the work be delivered? Not later than a month. A check on account? Another smile, more X-rays — why surely. And off I went to the lawyers with the first of the dividends.

II.

Years later, when we were coming out of Voisin's in Paris, I asked Charles Frohman why he ran such a risk with me. He said, "That's my business, running risks, is n't it? Besides, I liked your tie, and your darned independence, and when I asked you if you 'd do the job something came into your face that told me you 'd burst before you let me down." And I very nearly did. I had no more notion of what to write or how to write it than a fantail pigeon wobbling on a croquet ball. A month

was mine, however, four weeks of priceless days. It would be perfectly simple to make up a plot in the bath, on the golf links, riding through lonely lanes on a bicycle, practicing hoop shots alone, walking, walking, walking. At the end of the first week, nothing; tremors of nervousness. At the end of the second week, nothing; insomnia and panic, — the chance of my life to be missed, money taken under false pretenses, the little laugh from Marshall, ignominy. It appeared that I was suffering from obliteration of the brain. I turned over everything that I had written. Useless. I went over everything that I had mapped out to write. Hopeless. I considered several ingenious methods of suicide. And then, in the middle of a night, when moths were cracking in my candles, I sat once more at the desk I hated the sight of and wrote on a sheet of untouched paper the following paradox — "Cinderella of Berkeley Square" — and never left it, even for sleep and meals, until the play was finished. The verdict on the first act that I sent untyped to Frohman was "Fine. Go on", and from Hicks, "Great, we're hard at work on lyrics and the music." When the second act was done under the intoxication of approval, the first was in rehearsals. During these, under the brilliant and never sparing direction of the restless Seymour Hicks, it was decided to change the title, and when

I suggested "The Catch of the Season" Hicks came back with "But if it fails they 'll call it 'The Snitch of the Season'," but the new one stuck. *It was not going to fail!* The evening of the *répetition générale*, at which J. M. Barrie, Arthur Pinero, Alfred Sutro, H. B. Irving, Dion Boucicault, Robert Marshall, Frohman himself and hosts of his other friends were present, in addition to Lord Esher, Sir Alfred Fripp, Sir Harry Poland and half the members of the Garrick Club, Hicks and I left the theatre after the final rehearsal at five o'clock in the morning. Dog tired, but in the highest spirits, we walked to Lockhart's in Covent Garden for something to eat and drink. London made it very inconvenient for hungry people at that hour of the day. The men who drove the fruit and vegetable carts to the market from the country were there in force, and in his best Charles Surface-David Garrick manner the sympathetic, homogeneous, delightful Seymour Hicks, who, if he had been able to stand still on one spot long enough to take himself seriously, and recognize the genius that was his, must have become the greatest actor on the English stage, stood cups of coffee, sausages and mashed potatoes to all in sight. After which, with a sudden change of mood and his hat at a rakish angle, he took my arm and we walked the empty streets, talking of

life and death and the great hereafter until the city woke, and the bees began to swarm. Whereupon we surprised Romanos when the cleaners were still at work and clicked our tankards of velvet to the success of the play which meant a good deal to him but everything to me. Translated into plain English, velvet is a mixture of champagne and stout. The catch was not a snitch, although it was produced on Friday. It ran long enough to put me on temporary velvet and settle all my debts. Also it was the means of forming a close and intimate friendship and future collaboration between Seymour Hicks and myself, and a most affectionate relationship with Charles Frohman which continued until the *Lusitania* sent him on the great adventure of death.

An extraordinary man, Charles Frohman, a kind, simple, loyal, courageous, resilient, hard-working, honorable man, to work for whom it was a privilege and a pleasure. For one whose business it was to control theatres, collect plays and create stars on both sides of the Atlantic, who was the czar, the High Panjandrum, whose room was the Mecca of the dramatists, who loved Barrie as a brother, Sutro as a cousin, Pinero, Marshall, Guitry, Rostand, Haddon Chambers, Somerset Maugham, Granville Barker, Augustus Thomas, and an army of others, equally gifted, as his friends,

but was scared to death by Bernard Shaw, Frohman knew more about the theatre but less about plays than any man I knew. It seemed to me that he accepted plays either because they were the work of very successful writers or because they contained the leading parts which appealed to his stars. It is probably incorrect to say that he never produced a play by an unknown man. There must have been exceptions to his rule. I was one. It is, however, correct, so far as I can remember, to say that he went after success, which he worshiped, with an avidity backed by all the money in the world that led to a corner in the play market which had never happened before and has never happened since. And yet there was a closet in his sitting-room in the Savoy in which all the plays that were ever written were piled in a heap during his meteoric régime. And once, when I was waiting for him to come back from an early rehearsal of "Peter Pan", at which he gazed with awe, amazement and many misgivings before it was produced, I opened the door of this black hole of Calcutta and gasped with horror at the sight. There must have been hundreds of plays there, all in envelopes, each one being the brain child of a would-be dramatist, five feet deep. Hundreds of beseeching voices seemed to cry out to me as I stood there, appalled. "Help us, you

who know this monarch, you who have been produced. Fish us out into the open, give us a friendly word. Remember that, but by the grace of God, you might be lying here too. We are better than your stuff, there is that in us to shake the world. We are the embryo Pineros, Maughams, Barries, Sutros. We have been written not in ink, but blood, and oh the joy, the effort and the heartbreak that went to the making of us." And when Frohman came in, I turned upon him and demanded to know what right he had to treat these sleepless nights and strenuous days in such a cavalier way. This was Frohman's answer, with a twinkle of his eyes. "Every play that's got anything in it is alive," he said. "So every night I open this closet and take the first that comes to my hand because that's the one that's worked its way up to the top. The others are dead."

Among the other plays that I wrote for Frohman were "The Belle of Mayfair", "The Beauty of Bath", "The Mountain Climber", "Arsène Lupin", the London version of "A Woman's Way", "The Hoyden", "A Sense of Humour", "A Bolt from the Blue" and "Pro Tem." The last two were adaptations from the French and immediate failures. The history of "The Belle of Mayfair" with Leslie Stuart's music is rather amusing. It was the successor of "The Catch of the Season"

at the Vaudeville Theatre and when the original version, by the author who adapted "The Merry Widow", went into rehearsal, Edna May, the star of the play, was popularly supposed to have flung her part on the stage and trampled it under her feet. In other and less dramatic words she expressed her disapproval of the lines with which she had been provided and drove away to lunch, leaving a large and expensive company in chaos and amaze. With a Napoleonic gesture, therefore, and with a view to speed, Frohman gave the first act to Charles Brookfield to write all over again and the second to me. Brookfield and I never met to discuss the thing and decide on a plan of campaign and so he had no notion of what I was going to do and I had n't the remotest idea of his line of thought. All that either of us had to go upon was a rough sketch of the plot as it was told to us by Frohman in the fewest of words. We both wrote against time in different parts of London, while the company, in a strange, uncertain frame of mind, rehearsed the numbers, all of which had, of course, to be "worked in" by the independent collaborators. At the end of a week both acts were finished and in rehearsal. Edna May was pleased and the clouds had lifted. Busy with other pressing jobs, Brookfield and I were unable to put in an appearance or to see the play

until it had been running for weeks. We met, for the first time, when Leslie Stuart invited us to lunch at the Savoy on a matinee day and he was so astonished to be told that we had never seen the result of our disunited efforts that he telephoned to the theatre in order to reserve two seats. But the house was sold out, and so Brookfield and I strolled over to the theatre together to stand at the back of the dress circle. It so happened, however, that I was caught in the foyer by an interviewer and was only able to join the sardonic Brookfield as the curtain was descending on the act that was his. My apology was accepted, we talked until the curtain was about to rise on the act that was mine. Then Brookfield, with the obvious purpose of creating a story to add to his magnificent collection, begged to be excused and hurried away. I do not believe that he ever did see my act and I 'm perfectly certain that I never saw his. Oddly enough, though, "The Belle of Mayfair" exceeded the limits of any reasonable claim or expectation, in fact created a record, and when Edna May left the stage to get married and everyone thought that the end had arrived, her part was taken by Billy Burke, who gave it many further months of box-office vitality. Camille Clifford had already been injected into it to sing a very catchy number about the Gibson girl

into which Ibsen was dragged for no other reason than to provide a rather soulful rhyme. Naturally enough, Leslie Stuart attributed this astonishing success to his music, though I put it down to the second act and Brookfield to the first.

What an excellent Bab Ballad Gilbert might have added to his ever green volume if we had told him the story of this severely handicapped, but undefeatable piece.

The adventures of "A Sense of Humour" are not without amusing moments, to me at least. Like every other play that I managed to write at that time, it was handed to Charles Frohman as a matter of course. We had no written agreement, at this point or any other. His word was as good as his bond. But for the first time since we had been together we disagreed on the question of cast. I detested the star system which subjected the play and all its other parts to the tyrannical domination of a generally inefficient, though completely egotistical person, and I do so still. And I had no great liking for the particular star whom he immediately saw in this play. In fact, to be perfectly frank, I disliked the lady extremely. I thought that she would have made an admirable flower-shop girl. I said so, probably. At any rate, Frohman's back was up, and he refused to see any good whatever in the names that I had

Viola. (with real amusement)

Archie jealous! Oh, that's gorgeous. In any case, he'd never be jealous of you.

Billy. (touching his tie)

Think not? There have been stories about me, y'know.

Viola.

Oh, I've heard them, — often. In fact you've never forgotten to tell me. But the bare idea of Archie being able to think of anything outside his own concerns shows how little you know of the man you know so well. (She goes to door C)

Billy (rising from table. He napkin falls. He kicks it under the table)

However, let's play the game. Let's remember that we're people of breeding. You wander out aimlessly and I'll bustle down to the Club house in about ten minutes & join you in our usual spot. (up to her with serio-comic ecstasy.) What d'yer say, you sun-warmed peach?

Viola.

(with only a nose to keep them apart) All right, if it amuses you. I congratulate you on sun-warmed peach. Anyone would think that we were desperately in love, wouldn't they, from your fatuous expression.

Billy (catching her)

We are — at least I am, and you're going to be. Desperately. The world would be damned well lost for you.

Viola. (pretending to purr)

Oh, isn't that nice. (She frees herself quickly, with what is almost a guffaw) Go for your clubs, you egregious humbug. And leave half of them at home. You're too old to carry such weights.

Billy (twinging at the word age, but acting hard.)

Ah, you little know. You little know.... In ten minutes then. Meakin! Meakin! Curse the fellow! (He goes off, digging his heels into the carpet, a perfect specimen of the temporarily silly ass)

A Manuscript Page from the Play "A Sense of Humour."

chosen. We argued all among the unpacked luggage which had just come from the ship. The end of it was that I asked him to lend me one of his theatres on a Sunday night in which I could show him, with a finished and complete performance, how the play would be acted by the cast of my choice. He consented, but had already made up his mind that I was hopelessly wrong and that the play could only be popular after it had been squeezed out of shape and made unrecognizable by the little lady who had a penchant for everyone else's lines. That is the star system as it was then and always will be. The arrangement was that he should come to his own theatre and see what my company could do. With great enthusiasm and loyalty, rehearsals began at once. Adequate scenery was procured, charming frocks were made, and when finally the exciting night arrived and Charles Frohman came in after dinner with a fat cigar to sit, as he expected, in an empty theatre like a solitary God, he found that the place bore every well-known resemblance to an ordinary first night. The house was packed from floor to ceiling, with the critics in their accustomed seats. The actors played to perfection, the play was received with every sign of favour, the notices next day were extremely friendly, but when I called to see Charles Frohman like a cat that had swallowed

the canary he was more than ever determined to cast his star. We not only agreed to disagree on the matter, but when the play went eventually into the Playhouse for a run it was one of the few that was not "presented" by my very good friend. It was afterwards played in Paris in English, an honour that was rather rare. When Comyns Carr stood one day with Frohman outside the theatre in which this star was playing in a most expensive failure with "and Miss Something Something" in enormous letters on every bill, Carr said, "Charles, you can place the 'and' where you cannot place the 'art.'" It was Barrie, of course, who quietly suggested that this word should frequently be changed to "but."

It was the thing to lunch at the Savoy at that time — every grill room, like every dog, has its day — and a heterogeneous collection of celebrities was to be found there every noon. Marconi predicting wireless messages, as to which nobody believed a word; Lord Roberts talking of the German menace, and being called an old man in his dotage; Grahame-White suggesting the use of flying machines for warfare and being laughed at; Lord Northcliffe talking in whispers about the purchase of the *Times*, which seemed an utter impossibility even to himself; Lord Esher, tall and mysterious, pulling many unseen strings; and

Horatio Bottomley, who laughingly made his name rhyme with Cholmondeley, backing horses and drinking champagne. Charles Frohman affected a table in an inconspicuous corner where he met his friends and laid his plans for the invasion of London, which he carried out with astonishing results. Theatre managers trembled in their not very secure strongholds, while actors' salaries went up. The men who have since become Lords Reading, Beaverbrook, Dalziel, Birkenhead, sat here and there, as busy with their futures as their presents, and the footlight favourites of the moment brought as much of their spot-light with them as they could. The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse had not yet taken their thoroughbreds to the blacksmith's shop.

III.

I said just now that Frohman knew less about plays than any man I have ever met. In justice to C. F. I ought immediately to have added that nearly every other man connected with the theatre knew then, and knows now, very little more. The history of the stage proves this statement to the full, and gleams with instances showing that a play's success is an accident achieved in spite of all surrounding handicaps, a godsend, and never the result of the confident judgment of the man-

ager, the actor, the reader, the agent, the critic or anyone else who is professionally concerned. Of all men the actor is the last one whose opinion has value, because he must always regard a play not as a story in dramatic form but as a vehicle of exploitation in which the leading part has enough fat in it for him. The dramatist, one would imagine, is the one and only man whose prediction is worth anything. He, after all, writes the play, makes it his business to study his audiences and, unlike both manager and actor, spends enough time away from the theatre to enable him to recover from its unearthliness. But the dramatist, generally speaking, is not regarded as a prophet in his own country and is never a hero to his manager, and so, dealing, as he usually does, with people to put it in the gentlest way, less sensitive than himself, who run the theatre as they would and often have run a grocer's shop, a baseball team or a nigger minstrel show, he rarely ventures to express his opinion or, better still, to point out the meaning of his play which the average manager has an invariable way of missing altogether. He has so long been called "the poor damned author", stood by while his play is sadly mauled, and been greeted at rehearsal with "Oh, hullo, what the this or that are you doing in here?" that he has become convinced of the time-honoured

stage fact that he is less than the dust. The manager, the director, the star and now the scene-designer are the only ones who count, just as the good old hen is clean forgotten by the boy who picks her egg out of the straw, the farmer who drives it to the station, the trust which manipulates its price and the dealer who places it with delicate fingers into the paper bag. Frohman was not the only man who was worried to death about "Peter Pan." Barrie himself was another. And when George Alexander was in the last throes of the long drawn out rehearsals of "His House in Order", he and every member of the company were so wrapped in gloom that even Pinero, the master, caught the sad infection. They were but little encouraged by my bursts of enthusiasm. Before and even after the first performance of Jerome's "The Third Floor Back" Forbes-Robertson was very doubtful of its success. I wish he had accepted my offer to pay its losses if he would make over its winnings to me. "Milestones", fished out of a drawer, like "Grumpy", was only put on as a last resort, and when, the other day, "Rain" was looked over while it was being tried on the dog in the country, sad were the faces of its sponsors and low their spirits. All their additions and alterations were, luckily, cut out before it opened in New York under its original title

and not as "Red Light Sadie" as it might have done.

"The Mountain Climber," supposed to be a farce, which Francis Wilson told me built his house, was based by me upon a German plot, and written in the delightful little library of the Garrick Club. As fast as I wrote each scene and dropped it on the old, red Turkey carpet it was gathered up, taken to the typist, and put into rehearsal at the Comedy Theatre, in Panton Street. From time to time as I scratched away, trying to invent the tragic-comic situations that should cause an audience's sides to split, distinguished and sometimes pre-historic heads poked into the room, annoyed eyes saw me in possession and I was left alone. Finis having been reached at last I went away to bed, slept until the cows came home and returned to town to see, with immense curiosity, what the three acts that I had flung off looked like as they had been brought to life by the remarkable company at work upon them, under the brilliant direction of Dion Boucicault. I confess that I was much astonished and greatly pleased. Too easily pleased, as it turned out, because the night before the production one of the officials of the theatre, who knew the play by heart, came to me and said, "If only this thing had a few laughs in it, Hamilton, it might stand something of a chance." A few laughs! I was

prepared to swear, probably unwisely, although I had heard them in my head, that it had a laugh in almost every line. In fact, I did more than swear. I offered to bet a good round sum to that effect. The experienced person who had spent the greater part of his life in and round the theatre accepted me, the conditions being that if there were even twenty laughs in the whole of the first act he would gladly pay and smile. I had not any real faith in my work, being only "the bloomin' author", and so I was very nervous when I stood at the back of the hot pit, at the elbow of a policeman, to await results. The knowing and cocksure official stood on my other side, holding my hand so that he might squeeze it at every laugh, or not, as the case might be. He squeezed it twenty times in the first six minutes, paid me there and then in crinkling notes and left the pit as joyful as I was, scenting a run. I gave one of the notes to the Bobby, being quite delirious. Thus was proved, once more, the total inability of the hide-bound theatre man to know how a play will react upon an audience and the utter disbelief he places in the man who writes it, who does n't really write but just reports. The leading part was played by Huntley Wright, a very real comedian with the tragic sense, and one night when, deep into the run, I took a party of friends to see the play, he

spotted me in the second row and, with a distorted sense of humour which made me want to crawl under my seat and hide my blushes, addressed every male character as "Cosmo", until the audience saw his joke and my discomfiture, and yelled. It was an evening of goose flesh for me.

Though I was greatly, but not ungratefully, interrupted by Charles Frohman in the writing of "Adam's Clay", it was finished in due course, accepted and, in the usual way, brought out. That is, it was dropped in among the great welter of novels with hardly more splash than is made by a small stone in the sea, to sink or swim according to its inherent ability to float. Publishers had dignity in those days. They were, too, so anxious to avoid the accusation of being merchants that, although not actually displeased at making money, they did everything in their power to avoid the vulgar methods of other men who offered goods for sale. Many of them pursue these methods still, and remind one of no one so much as the exhausted fisherman who, after an unsuccessful day, throws all his bait into the trout stream and hurries off. If an eager fish makes a grab at one of his succulent morsels there is no hook to cause it any harm. Unheralded, therefore, and scantily advertised, my novel found its way by accident to the papers. To my astonishment and breath-

less unbelief the *Standard* reviewed the book shortly after it was published and wound up an enthusiastic pean with these words: "In this impressive and outspoken novel, Mr. Cosmo Hamilton makes a marked advance in reputation and in knowledge of the essentials of the novelist's art. In 'Adam's Clay' he has burst the bonds of surface cleverness and has dared to paint life in the strong colors that certain aspect of the Human Comedy inevitably demands. We cannot recall any book where the mask is thrown off and where the nerve and mind and obscure promptings of emotion are laid bare with such an economy of primitive sensationalism. In a word, it is worthy of Balzac."

"*Worthy of Balzac!*" If an escaped lunatic had crept up behind me with a bludgeon and brought it down unerringly on my pate I could not have been half as deeply affected as by this phrase. I walked on air and lived in expectation. I pounced on all the papers, daily and weekly, to see the triumphant use that must be made of such a line. Some time went by, and then, as nothing happened of this kind, I threw off my natural shyness and went to town to call my publisher's attention to a review which most certainly he had overlooked. With some reluctance I was ushered to the presence, talked cricket, and the

weather, and the rottenness of politics, and then produced the notice, red pencil underlining the last three words. Oh, yes, they had been seen along with the rest. It made nice reading, certainly, very, very nice; but — but — and again but. Nothing could be done. No. And then, you see, to say that the book was worthy of Balzac, was, after all, perhaps, something very much like exaggeration, eh?

Well, I did n't dislike the idea of my book being sold as much as he did, and when I walked away from the dusty office it was with a fierce determination, at the expense of dignity (what a deterring word that is!), to use that phrase, to plaster it on the sky for all the town to see. I marched off to my friend the billposter who had given me time and confidence and finally a receipt. I told him that I wanted to put "'Adam's Clay', worthy of Balzac" on the streets unless he knew of a method of festooning it on the clouds. Putting things on the street was of course, his metier, what he called his "long suit." Sandwich-men, with a board above their heads, and two, like slices of bread, between which they went their beefy way, were very useful mediums of advertisement, if there were enough. Enough? I gave an order for a small army, to parade in one long line, to break up in bunches outside the theatres on mati-

née days and form a circle round Trafalgar Square at five o'clock. Dignity? Hang dignity. Fore and aft, "'Adam's Clay', by Cosmo Hamilton, Worthy of Balzac." It must become a song, a catch-phrase, an irritation, a mustard plaster, the day's incessant hymn. "Good morning, have you used Pear's soap? Since then I've used no other." I had written this novel with the laudable ambition of having it read, bought, talked about, not, as my publisher seemed to think, to keep me out of mischief and exercise my pen. All right, then. Red letters on a white background. Monday next, the day. . . . Came Monday, as the minor poet loves to put it, and the strange creatures who write the titles of moving-pictures. With a sense of impending trouble I arrived at Paddington from the country and hired a cab to drive to the Sports' Club in St. James's Square. Nothing happened to disturb the even tenor of the town, or cause my hair to stand on end beneath my hat, until presently I caught sight of "'Adam's Clay', by Cosmo Hamilton, worthy of Balzac" in single file and what appeared to be battalions. Slopping along at the edge of the curb stone "Adam's Clay — Adam's Clay — Adam's Clay — Worthy of Balzac — Balzac — Balzac!" Like Falstaff's men in buckram they multiplied at every look. Two, four, six, eight, twenty, fifty, hundreds, thousands!

I gasped, laughed, shuddered and tried to hide behind the apron of the cab.

What a hideous blow at the dignity of letters! What a vulgar stab in the most vulnerable part of publishing precedent. In my mind's eye I saw Locke and Hichens stagger at the blow, and the famous Benson brothers quiver at the sight. I saw publishers rush from their interstices and gibber. I heard the bones of literary men rattle in their graves. "Adam's Clay, Adam's Clay, Adam's Clay, — Balzac — Balzac — Balzac", all day long I met them in the streets. In fact, to my horror, they seemed to follow me about. Oxford Street, Regent Street, the Strand, Piccadilly and even in Pall Mall, — they were everywhere in one long sloppy line. And when the enthusiastic students of the drama waited in patient queues outside the pits of theatres there stood these sandwich men, blatant, forcing their message down London's reluctant throat. "'Adam's Clay', by Cosmo Hamilton — was worthy of Balzac", sir and madam, the *Standard* had said so, and it must be true. And when, finally, in one unbroken round of bad taste, they formed a circle about Trafalgar Square, watched by the one good eye of Nelson and the dull astonished gaze of those old lions, it was more than I could stand. I bolted, but not before the people whom I knew had

stopped, laughed and said things — congratulation sometimes, or the reverse. "What's all this H'Adam's Clay by Cosmo 'Amilton, — and who the 'ell's Balzac anyway?" was one thing that I heard. I fled precipitately to the country, full of shame and laughter, to hide my head, and there I found a pile of telegrams in all of which was expressed the pleasure of my friends. Ironically enough the general impression of that day's business was that my publisher had an enormous belief in my book to indulge in such a splashing. They little knew that when the news was broken to him he had probably whirled round and round and fainted, or that he had undergone a nervous breakdown when orders for the book poured in so fast that the presses grew hot and sticky. Nor did they imagine how miserable his life was made for a little while by the other authors on his list who besieged the office to demand peevishly why I was his favorite son, why mine was the book to enjoy this boosting while theirs fell stillborn from the press. Sir George Hutchinson is an old and dear friend of mine, but it was a long time before he forgave me for this dreadful indiscretion which caused such inconvenience and reproach. The wonder is that he did not whip in his retirement from the ranks of publishers, and eke out a bitter existence at a South Coast watering place.

CHAPTER THREE

Clare Sheridan. Mrs. Asquith. Sir Herbert Tree. Sir George Alexander. "The Fortune of War." The Actor-Manager System. Harry Fragson. "Castles in Spain." Charles Frohman Again. Casting "Chantecler." Arsène Lupin." Sir Gerald du Maurier. "A Woman's Way." Arthur Bourchier. "Scandal." Miss Francine Larrimore.

I.

THE beautiful, plucky, but astonishingly unexpected Clare Sheridan, who is as little frightened of the pen as she is of the platform or her sculptor's tools, or, for the matter of that, of anything or anybody, except perhaps her charming little boy upon whom has descended the magic name of Richard Brinsley ("Ra-ther!" said he) is poor. She makes no bones about it. To that distressing fact must be put down, of course, the various things that she has done which have not been understood. The Kipling episode, for instance, and her Russian busts. Also the vague linking of her name with that of Charlie Chaplin, that wistful moving-picture star who has sacrificed his tragic genius on the altar of an easy popu-

larity, and who hides the soul of Punchinello beneath the comic rags of slapstick. Mrs. Sheridan, like all beautiful and very sensitive women, should have been preserved from the difficult art of self-preservation by a country grateful for her beauty. There should be, I think, in every well-constituted nation, a civil and even deferential list made up of the infrequent names of notable loveliness created, as a tribute, in order to provide against the uncomfortable possibility of poverty and for the life-long retention of pride. Women who are obliged to earn their livings are always somehow a little more unscrupulous than men. They have a greater impatience of tradition.

I drag in Mrs. Sheridan here because I want to say something about London and with her description of it as "a great, brooding, thoughtful, smoke-coloured figure of masculine severity" I do not agree in the least.

I see London as a mellow, cheerful and courageous city with every reason quietly to be proud of a peculiar beauty, like that of a mother of many children who has grown old gracefully. To me there is nothing about her that is either masculine or severe; she seems, on the contrary, very feminine and kind. All her lines are soft and her fondness for lawns, flowers and trees comes gratefully to the eye wherever there is an

available space in which they may be cultivated. Then, too, to those sons of hers who must wander from her side for several years at a stretch she defeats the inexorable alterations of time by remaining always the same. She has an indefinable charm that other cities lack and a gift for holding the love and loyalty of her people that is maternal.

The London of 1904–1906 and onwards, of which I am writing now, managed to retain a Hague-like dignity, in spite of the introduction of motor-driven vehicles which have the same effect upon a city as that of a missionary upon the naïve and contented life of aborigines. In spite, also, of Mrs. Asquith and her carefully selected group of sycophants and imitators who were not content with suffering from a virulent form of auto-infatuation but kept on saying so. It was their ineradicable belief, religion almost, that they had made a corner in wit, intellectuality and independence of thought and action. Not to be a Soul was to be a mere body. Success in art, letters, music, the drama, politics and medicine depended, dog-like, upon their bone of praise, they thought. They stood for freakishness and faddism. They took a fiendish delight in carrying out metaphorical raids upon English life for the purpose of collecting and making bon-

fires of the last remaining relics of early Victorianism. And they succeeded remarkably well. Their persistent, autocratic propaganda made itself felt not only in both Houses of Parliament, the press, Eton, Harrow, Oxford, Cambridge and the Army, but in all the arts. Dressmakers caught the infection too. The thin hands of the intelligencies touched the suburbs, even. Outwardly, nevertheless, London retained its mellowness. Its horizontal lines were as soothing and correct as those of Tennyson. It is true that the South African millionaire had made a break in their rhythm here and there, especially in Park Lane and Grosvenor Square, and that, already, there had been several assaults upon the portcullis of the House of Lords which had caused the smooth hair of the members of the senior Clubs to stand on end. It would be difficult to say how many deep blushes of shame and horror must have crept all over their now bald pates at the creations that have been made since then, especially during the devastating régime of the brilliant person from Wales who gave out titles to all the men who wrote his praises and licked his boots with as little respect for the dignity of England as a man has for the rules of decency who is lent a country house and makes presents of the grapes and peaches. A cross between

Mark Antony and Billy Sunday, he is like Humpty-Dumpty now, and may never rise again. But the Duke of Devonshire was still entombed behind the old walls of his Piccadilly house, the animal agony of the saxaphone had not then been introduced to the restaurants with the other torturing instruments of jazz, and Mr. F. E. Smith was still far from being the glistening ornament of England's ancient aristocracy that he has become to-day. Colonel Repington was waiting, with what patience he could muster, for the war, which provided him with so many luncheons. Nat Gould led the sales among our novelists, although Hall Caine and Charles Garvice ran him close. Above all the fertile George R. Sims doled out Tatcho and Mustard and Cress to the heads and stomachs of the average man, Beerbohm Tree gave his suppers in the Dome of His Majesty's Theatre, George Alexander held the ramparts of the St. James's, with gentlemanly persistence, against the erratic onslaughts of the Frohman invasion of the London stage, and John Hare emerged from his well-earned retirement from time to time to look at an eager and rapidly changing profession through "A pair of spectacles."

It was at a gala performance at His Majesty's, after the coronation of King George, that the gay Lord Clarendon, rattling with bangles, peered

GEORGE GROSSMITH.

The best-dressed man on the stage.

short-sightedly at these three much missed actors who had then become theatrical Knights, and having asked who they were as they stood together under the red and white striped awning in very pristine Court clothes, said, "How damn well these actors wear their fancy dress." It was at this emotional and picturesque affair, too, that I, a little bored at the efforts of our stars to entertain the King and Queen and their Royal Guests, wandered out to look at life, and having admired the Horse and Grenadier Guards who were drawn up on the thin layer of yellow gravel in the otherwise deserted Haymarket, went round to the back of the Theatre and, in one of the many Royal carriages that were drawn up in Charles Street, saw four red-coated flunkies playing poker on a tall cockaded hat, with a bottle of whiskey on the floor between their feet. The light of a lamp-post fell full upon their concentrated faces and made a Rembrandt picture that I have never forgotten.

That was, I suppose, the crowning moment in the life of Beerbohm Tree, — the King of the Stage, as he adored to think that he was, entertaining the King of England, in what he called "my bee-utiful Theatre." A simple creature, Tree, as apparent as Godiva beneath his hair-like veil of artificiality. A kind man, generous

and lavish, very loyal to his friends, possessed by an imp of mischief which led him into fooling even during the nervousness of the first performance of a new production and the sacrifice of all his sounder feelings for the sake of a repeatable jest. The story goes, for instance, that when Lewis Waller applied to him for a part in a Shakespeare revival, six months or so after his supposed elopement which began with a motor accident and ended in a hospital, he replied with round-eyed indignation and his richest lisp, "My good Waller, you may run away with another man's wife but you may not act in my bee-utiful Theatre."

Although he was never a great actor, and was, indeed, often unconsciously comic in his most serious rôles, Tree manufactured a rather striking personality and a perfection of make-up which enabled him to get into the skin of the character that he was representing though never into its bones and soul. He found it difficult to memorize the lines of his always leading parts and with the most fertile invention posted prompters under tables, behind rocks, jutting walls or ancient oaks, so that the elusive word might be whispered to him as he moved in well disguised anguish from cache to cache. He had a keen and most artistic eye, revelled in colour and pageantry, did everything in the grand manner, was a brilliant though

not too patient stage director and had so genuine a love for the stage, "my beloved craft," as he always called his profession, that, in spite of his enunciatory handicap and curious floating methods not unlike those of ectoplasm, he did much to raise the level of the theatre and create His Majesty's into the mecca of Suburbia. He spent a fortune in building himself into an atmosphere of greatness, and with his first and second secretaries, valets, Lords of the Bed-Chamber, Cabinet Ministers, secret service, Major-domos, Ambassadors and favorites was like nothing so much in private life as a Ruritanian monarch clinging often by the skin of his teeth to a country which existed only in his own imagination. The most exact illustration of his peculiar gift of self-deception and freakish sense of distorted humour can best be drawn by describing a disconcerting episode in which I was the willing victim. He had invited me to see him in a revival of Oscar Wilde's "Lady Windermere's Fan" — a feeble, fatuous play, I always thought, which, like "Hamlet," is full of quotations, though they are not, as Shakespeare's are, quite original — in which, resembling a very handsome but rather leggy pouter pigeon, he appeared as the epigrammatic and unscrupulous Peer, wearing corsets, a beautiful wavy brown wig and a moustache of long, soft hairs. Twice during the course of the

play he sent one of his diplomats to my box to inquire as to my comfort, in his characteristically hospitable and gently sarcastic way, and finally issued a royal command for my presence in his disrobing room at the fall of the curtain. During the intricate process of un-Peering, the peeling of the moustache and eyebrows, the lifting of the wig, the disentanglement of the stays — which let down the noble chest to its normal place beneath his lower waistcoat — he invited me to supper in the Viking Hall in the Dome of the theatre. Under the impression that his inner man was to be refreshed in company perhaps with Comyns Carr, Sir Alfred Fripp, Max Beerbohm, Lily Hanbury, Maxine Elliot, or Arthur Ponsonby, Hugh Spottiswoode, Lord Esher, Rufus Isaacs, now Lord Reading, Marshall Hall, one or two officers of the Guards, and a sprinkling of beautiful women of elastic society, in the usual way, I accepted, gladly, of course. Those suppers in the Dome were unique. Arm in arm, we ascended to the room beneath the roof, discussing my idea that he should put on an adaptation of "Tartuffe" in the costumes of the period, though not in the traditional Molière manner, and I found at once that we were to be alone in Ruritania. The disconcerting part of it came in when Tree, placing on the table a large note-

book bound in red leather, said, "For our impromptus." It goes without saying that the constant sight of this deadly volume had the effect of putting us both into a state of mental impotence from which we never even partially recovered. An impromptu is the only thing that cannot be manufactured by machinery, and the self-conscious pages would have remained entirely virginal but for Tree's solemn entries of all the Wilde epigrams which had just been delivered on the stage below as though they were the spontaneous spark of his flashing supper wit. But that he had a way of saying very neat things on the spur of the moment was never better shown than when, after Arthur Bourchier had deserted his company to put on a rival Shakespeare production at the Garrick Theatre, a loud report shook London just at the moment when he stood in the wings in the gorgeous red robes of Cardinal Wolsey, and in answer to the "Good Heavens, what 's that?" of someone at his side, said, "Bourchier's head."

One Sunday night, some winters before the war, a dinner was given in a literary club in London at which Beerbohm Tree happened to be among the guests. With the cruelty which is inherent in the natures of all good toastmasters, the famous person who was officiating that eve-

ning spotted Tree, and although, and possibly because, he knew that of all men that one was most lamentably nervous and incoherent without long and careful preparation, called upon him to say a few words. The stupefaction that spread over Tree's pale, moon-like face was painful to behold, and when, recovering from the effects of the thunderbolt sufficiently to be able to raise himself gradually to his uncommon height, he stood swaying from foot to foot, I expected to see him wave his long fingers at the company, shrug his expressive shoulders in eloquent reproach and slide out of the room in the peculiar way that was his. Instead, however, of owning to defeat in so perfectly justifiable a manner, he held his place for a moment of profound and uneasy silence, during which his spirit seemed to leave his tall, graceful body in search of help and inspiration, and to come back finally with a half-mischievous, half-triumphant smile. Then, with one white hand on his hip and the other tipped lightly on the back of his chair, he commenced to lisp an absolutely unbroken flow of exquisitely chosen words, much to the amazement and delight of all who knew him and had suffered on previous occasions under his stammering impromptus. In delivery, manner, and point it was perfect. It brought forth roar after roar

of laughter at its witty turns of phrase. His satirical references to the particular political butts of that time raised several bursts of applause, and finally, ending just at the moment when everybody most desired it to continue, it brought down the house. The whole thing was epoch-making, especially coming from Tree. When, several hours later, I walked out of the club with him, and offered my congratulations, he looked all about him in the exaggerated way that is associated on the stage with the impending give-away of an all important secret, chuckled, put his hands on my shoulders, and told me that he had merely delivered the after-dinner speech belonging to a part that he had been memorizing for months and would appear in at His Majesty's Theatre as soon as his plans permitted. The united scream of mirth that followed this delicious confession caused a stray mongrel to curl its tail more tightly between its legs and bolt for dear life. For some reason or other the play to which that part belonged was never produced — there is so often some reason or other for a play to fall through the bottom of a theatre — and the members of that dinner-party never had the joy of discovering why it was that Tree rose so wonderfully to the occasion.

II.

George Alexander was the complete antithesis of Beerbohm Tree. Very real and sincere, he did everything with cold, business-like calculation, greatly assisted by his devoted wife. He chose his plays and his companies with the most meticulous care, regarding his extremely good looking, well-groomed self as the divinely appointed representative of English aristocracy in plays which generally reflected the moods and temperament of high society. The theatre in which he reigned so long and so well was conducted with the prim precision and regularity of a smart boarding-house, or a school for the daughters of gentlemen. He was "the Chief", aloof, unemotional, irreproachable as well as unapproachable, attending to the business of his theatre with the punctuality and calm routine of a bank president, urbane and placid except during the inevitable periods of failure which affect the stage as well as every other concern depending upon the fickle fancy of the public, when his careful stucco broke and he became the artist, the very human man. If he never touched the heights of great acting he managed often, by dint of much earnestness and on the strength of his charming personality and frequent fat parts, to arrive at the halfway house. He was the matinée idol of London

for very many years. I was, I believe, the only writer who was able in those days to persuade him to hide his beauty under the white wig and beard of an old man, and that was when, some little time after the South African squabble, he put on by accident a one-act play of mine called "The Fortune of War" (I had intended to send him another but put this one into the envelope in a wool-gathering moment) in which he amazed his admirers by appearing as a Chelsea pensioner waiting in the cottage of his daughter-in-law at Aldershot for the return of his son who never came back. The so-called big moment of the little piece was when his son's regiment marched into the barracks nearby and the news of his death on the transport having been withheld from him, the old ex-sergeant major, decorating the parlour with coloured papers, tottered under the bad news, but pulled himself together to fling up a feeble and gallant hand in salute as the band played the National Anthem. At the dress rehearsal, which was watched only by Mrs. Alexander, myself, the manager and the scrubwomen, he was greatly elated to be told that one of the latter, a soldier's wife, had fainted as the curtain fell. A good criticism, indeed! The piece, delicately and finely acted and produced, went very well to a crowded house on the first performance, there

were cries of "Author, author", and to my horror and amazement I was dragged from the stalls by the stalwart manager, pushed through the iron door to the stage, gripped by the hand by George Alexander and led trembling to the footlights to take my first "call." "Bow," said Alexander, and I bowed. The applause made my hair stand on end and my collar wilt. "Bow again," he said, and I bowed again, seeing only a blur of faces over the glare of lights. "Now what do I do?" I asked, hoarsely. "Get off!" he said, "get off!" but how I got off I never really knew.

If the actor-manager system which prevailed in those smooth though unappreciated days was not good for plays it was a thousand times better than the appalling chaos into which the theatre has fallen now. Then, with Tree, Alexander, Charles Hawtrey, Lewis Waller, Cyril Maude, Granville Barker, Frederick Harrison, Fred Terry, Charles Wyndham, H. B. Irving, Martin Harvey and the rest, each in possession of his own theatre and all of them men of responsibility, high standing, dignity, long training and an enthusiasm which was a very excellent thing for the stage, there was none of the commercialism which has brought about the present system of profit rentals under which it is almost impossible for the independent manager to live. Syndicates for

MARTIN HARVEY.

Your obedient humble servant to command.

the most part control the theatres today and the members of them treat plays as they ought to be treating potatoes. It is very sad and bad and mad. Audiences, too, in London are not the same as they were before the war. The people for whom Pinero wrote "Iris" and "The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith", Marshall "The Duke of Killicrankie", Hubert Henry Davies "Cousin Kate", Somerset Maugham "Smith", cannot afford any longer to pay the high price for stalls, and the people who can are, to put it mildly, less intelligent, though not so lamentably lacking in that rather useful commodity as the present theatre magnates are inclined to believe. The reason why the actor-manager system was not good for plays can be explained better, perhaps, by the relation of an incident than by a lengthy technical dissertation. One of the men whose name is mentioned in the list above needed a play for the following season. He was adventurous enough to wish to give the young writers a chance, and so he sent for five or six of us to see whether we had anything written, or anything in the back of our heads, which was worthy of his gracious consideration. I am unable to say what happened to the others, but what happened to me was this: Having let it be known that I had a "great" idea which only he among living actors could

possibly bring to life, I was invited to supper at his most appropriate house, one which would have been described in the elephantine language of the house agent as "an elegant family mansion situate in the most desirable and advantageous portion of the West End." I was brought up to his study by a flunkey who played his part extremely well, I thought. In fact the whole scene was deftly and charmingly produced and directed, and the tired genius went through the process of recuperation with a thoroughness that was refreshingly and recognizably human. We talked unkindly and almost wholly about the other actor-managers and their obvious mistakes, and it was not until the first small hours of the morning, by which time my host had got his second wind and fourth whiskey and soda, that we came finally to the point. Like the blossom of the tobacco plant the actor-manager opened up most completely in the middle of the night. With my back to a very perfect Adam mantelpiece and a good cigar between my teeth I then told my plot as dramatically as I was able, leading up to each of the three curtains with the pride of a fond parent. The effect was all the more electrical because the fourth whiskey had less soda than the other three, and almost anything sounds good at that time in the morning.

Enthusiasm resulted, but the commission to write the play was deferred until the following night, when it was decided that we should sup together again for a discussion of greater detail. And so the pleasant process was duly repeated, and it was then that the microbe of actor-managership was inevitably injected into my idea. In other words my host and would-be producer began to argue about the plot with the not then too obvious endeavour to bring his part into greater prominence, an endeavour which, he knew as well as I did, kicked the whole story out of gear, reduced its value almost to nil and, in fact, made it something quite different from what it was originally. We argued in the friendliest manner. I conceded one or two points but clung with what was the most unexpectedly clam-like tenacity to the scheme as I had given it the previous night. I could see that I was regarded as a swollen-headed young person, curiously and wantonly unimpressed with the epoch-making opportunity of being "put on" by a footlight favourite of such undoubted eminence. At three o'clock in the morning I left, having stuck to my guns, and the room was filled with smoke. We were to meet again the following night for a final talk. In the meantime I was gravely and earnestly desired to think wisely and deeply and pray for light and humble-

ness and return in a less unresilient frame of mind, ready and willing to sacrifice the story that had aroused immediate enthusiasm upon the altar of the great man's egotism. I did pray during the remaining hours of that unusually sunny day, because, after all, my rates and taxes, to say nothing of my butcher's bill, were not likely to be paid by carrying an unproduced idea kangaroo-like in my case. Grist would, of course, be added to the mill even if the play were produced in the state into which it had been twisted by this monarch of the theatre. I remember walking about the more lonely parts of Hyde Park, where gamin sheep munched the uncountrified grass, with my face to the sky and my soul at the feet of God. But when the third of these strange meetings came, and once more I stood before the actor-manager with my fate in my hands, he threw aside all subterfuge and said that if I were prepared to give him all the best scenes, all the best lines and build the play not round the boy and girl but all about himself, make him suffer as the boy was to suffer, love as the girl was to love, and, as he was to be a clergyman, undergo a momentary shattering of faith which would give him a first-class opportunity to show how supremely he could touch the tragic note, a cheque on account of royalties

would be paid at once and a contract signed before I made my departure into a street deserted except for a prowling policeman and the nightly area cats. I am unable to say why I was possessed at that ticklish moment with a spirit of such reckless and foolhardy independence, but the fact remains that, with my back to the wall, I said "No," without meaning "Yes," and stuck to it. Either I wrote my own original plot which he liked so much or I wrote nothing. There was a queer incredulous silence, a long, penetrating, outraged stare. *Lèse-majesté* had been committed. It was . . . unbelievable. It was . . . unthinkable, and by Jove, it was . . . punishable. Shooting at sunrise was out of date, but an edict of banishment from that Ruritania was a dead certainty. A long finger touched a bell. An icy figure retired into an alcove. An arras parted and fell. The Lord of the Bedchamber, yawning, led me downstairs. I found myself alone and horrified under the stars. Something that was not quite a laugh sent a bitten-eared tabby into the darkness of a kitchen entrance. I had killed a fine chance and closed the portcullis of that particular autocrat forever against me. When that play was offered to the public in 1911 word for word as I had described it to the man who subsequently forgot my face, it was called "The

Blindness of Virtue." Can't you imagine how I love to say that it has been running ever since?

III.

Gaston Mayer, who had inherited the impresario mania from a father well known in the operatic world, came over the horizon about this time, and having taken a lease of the little Royalty Theatre in the rather insalubrious and garlic-reeking purlieus of Soho from the shrewd but kind-hearted Kate Santley, was filled with the peculiar theatrical passion which generally takes the form of losing somebody else's money by putting on a play. At what was considered then an enormous salary he had engaged a very extraordinary man called Harry Fragson to play the leading part in a piece not yet written or discussed into which the delightful music of "La Gran Via" was to be injected. For this somewhat vague enterprise a young American singer named May de Sousa, who could touch a higher note than any living girl and remain alive, had also been engaged. Harry Fragson was extraordinary because he had, it was said, begun his career as an English bricklayer who, while carrying bricks upon his shoulder in what I think is called a hod, scattered his aitches all about the bottom of the ladder, and burned with the ambition to challenge the greatness of Dan

Leno on the music halls. A very ugly man with a long sloping forehead, an enormous nose and eleven strands of oily hair which were plastered singly across a polished dome, he had, he told me, received a shower of carrots at his first and only performance at the Hall of his native town. Daunted but not broken, he shook his fist at merry England, bought a passage to France out of his hard-earned savings and entered Paris not only without a single franc but without one single word of the language. Asterisks. And then one night, some years later, the Director of the Folies Bergères, scouting about for talent, paid a blasé visit to a third-rate cabaret in the Latin Quarter, saw and heard this nightmare man with the ugly immovable white face as he sang a series of his own Boulevardier songs at the piano in the argot of the streets, and engaged him as an experiment to sing his audience in. It is only a picturesque exaggeration to say that, on the evening of which the ex-bricklayer had been dreaming every night of his Paris life, he sang them out as well. In other words, so immense and immediate was his success on that sophisticated stage that his presence was demanded again and again throughout the evening, and from that rare and wonderful night 'Arri Fragson became the rage of Paris. It was while he was at the height of his fashion there,

with a flourishing music-publishing business to keep his spare time occupied, that he sat down one afternoon at one of the little round tables outside the Café de la Paix, and, while waiting for his drink, read a few bars of music that had been scrawled anonymously on its marble top. Immediately copying them on the back of an envelope, he warmed the cockles of his heart with an old brandy, went home as fast as his long legs would take him, and out of these casual notes elaborated a song that was sung and played all over the world for years. With one round eye on advertisement and the other on justice Fragson advertised for the composer of the scribble on which this lucky song was based, and although all Paris suddenly developed hidden musical genius and applied for royalties no one came forward who could prove his claim. What happened to the man through whose brain that catchy melody floated while he sat outside the restaurant listening to the cantata of the streets remains a most intriguing mystery. Was it jotted down by a man beyond the tyranny of dread, too sceptical for the brief joys of fame, or by one who found his number on a taxi-cab and was carried to the morgue? Here is a fascinating riddle for a story writer who can make whatever use of it he likes. Out of the gold harvest that the song brought

in Fragson eventually sent a handsome cheque to a charitable fund for indigent musicians. Unlike several composers who could be mentioned without an effort, this one possessed a conscience. Then he returned to his native land to star in a Drury Lane pantomime, at once repeated his Paris success and was engaged by Gaston Mayer. On the strength of the various musical plays that I had written, I was asked to meet Fragson and write the book of the Royalty Theatre venture. I accepted the commission and the result of my efforts, for the first act of which Fragson himself wrote the music, the second act being filled with the lilting melodies of "La Gran Via", became "Castles in Spain." Eustace Ponsonby, commonly and inoffensively called "Scrobby", was responsible for the lyrics. I need hardly say that Fragson's piano was the principal "prop" whenever it was possible to use it. The three of us had a very amusing, strenuous and exciting time. Fragson very quickly became "'Arri" to me, and I steadily remained "'Amilton" to Fragson, because, although he spoke French like an apache, his English persisted in being that of the man who had loaded bricks upon a hod. I need hardly say that I wrote him into a character to whom I gave the wine-red name of Beaujolais in order that he might be able to continue to drop his aitches un-

noticed. I remember that when we endeavoured to choose an adequate singing chorus from the usual crowd of unsuitable applicants who always appear on these pathetic occasions, ninety per cent of the girls demonstrated their lack of voice by singing "Come h'out, come h'out, ther spring is 'ere," though not, as it happened, as a sympathetic compliment to the star. All went well and happily until about a week before production, when, with that passion for interference which belongs to managers and their backers, Gaston Mayer and his moneyed friend sat through a rather chaotic rehearsal and fell into a panic. They were, of course, quite entitled to do that, because one was presenting the play and the other was paying for it. Not content, however, with their *crise de nerfs* they waited until the weary company had been dismissed, called Fragson, Ponsonby and myself into the office and told us in so ill-chosen a set of phrases that our united efforts pleased them not, that we all took umbrage. In his most fluent French, which Mayer fortunately understood, Fragson allotted both manager and backer to the only place in which it seemed to him they completely deserved to be. Ponsonby was Etonian in his most incisive way, and I, finding my vocabulary not sufficiently rich, gave orders that these two nervous and unappreciative men were not

to be permitted to enter their theatre again until they came in with the first night audience. In this way, high-handed and unprecedented as it was, I started a fashion which ought to have been, but was n't, followed by every author every since. If it had been it would be impossible to say how many admirable plays would have found their way to the footlights without the preposterous doctoring to which almost every play is subjected in America where it is not considered good form to permit the work of any author, even Shakespeare, to pass through the tribulations of rehearsals without putting the second act first, the third act second and the first act last, and, after the quite useless try-out, handing it over to a series of play architects who shall inject into it as much as they can remember of a series of recent successes and musical comedy jokes. The most popular of these men are those with the most retentive memories, the most pachydermatous hides and the largest collections of the comic papers. Some time after his return to his beloved Paris to reappear at the Folies Bergères poor old "'Arri's" meteoric career was brought to a terrible and untimely end. In the kindness of his most kind and simple heart he had brought his father over from England to end his days in the comfort of the Paris apartments, but the old man was totally

unable to conform to his new surroundings or understand the wisdom and the common sense — one is as good as the other if they are not twins — of doing in Rome as the Romans do or leaving Rome at once. "Live and let live" has never really become the golden motto that it deserves to be. If, long ago, it had been instilled into the educational codes of all the races the pages of history would now be gloriously free from wars of greed and religion, from censorship and prohibition and from all the expensive failures of fanatics and faddists from which the world has suffered. Suffice it to say that Fragson senior so greatly disliked the Parisian way of life that he found his son pursuing so happily and domestically, that one night on 'Arri's return from the theatre he shot him through the heart — that most kind and simple heart. With the bricks of his own making, however, Harry Fragson had built himself an everlasting niche in the memory of Paris.

IV.

In the period during which I was working so closely with Charles Frohman it was his invariable habit to spend three or four months in London every year for the purpose mainly of collecting plays, absorbing theatres and creating stars. It was his wont on these flamboyant occasions

to take me with him to Paris to see what the City of Bridges had to offer, and to buy options on the ebullient output of the well-known French dramatists, who, of course, waited for his coming with that apparently inexhaustible cheque-book with all the eagerness of their British confrères. Usually he would stay with his valet-secretary, a capable and shrewd little man who was generally supposed to have been a prize-fighter earlier in his career, at the Grand Hotel somewhere under the eaves, while he engaged a room for me and other friends less loftily placed. I remember landing in Paris with him once on the night when the electricians had gone out on strike and the city, as though Time had suddenly played a mischievous and fantastic trick and put back the hands of the clock, was lighted only by gas-jets, oil-lamps and candles stuck into empty bottles. It was very wonderful, and, to me, most fascinating and picturesque. The vast foyer of the Grand Hotel, instead of blazing beneath a hundred thousand electric-light bulbs, loomed in shadows made by dozens of candles and one spurting shoot of raw gas. We dressed by candle light and found the numbers of our rooms with the aid of matches. We dined round a candle and eventually made our way into the dark streets between a sudden recrudescence of tallow.

All the theatres were closed, but, being determined to spend a busman's holiday, we felt our way round to the Circus, which was determined to hold its performance by hook or by crook. Here, in a box over the doors which let the performers into the ring, Frohman slept like a tired cherub, while I, in the semi-darkness of that bland and childlike building, watched the inevitable lady on the fat white horse, with pink nostrils, the clowns with their probably sad faces coated with paint, and the acrobats with their tittering feet and the conventional tricks of asking for applause. The tune that was played by the strong-winded band took me back on a wave of emotion to a tragic afternoon when, aged eight, I was escorted to a country circus at home and fell prostrate before the ravishing beauty of a lady in pink tights who rode a horse just as fat and white with the same pink nostrils and a streaming tail. The grand passion of eight led me at the end of the performance into dodging my brothers and my nursery-governess to hunt about the backs of the dirty tents for the sweet Godiva who had played the first swift havoc with my heart. Undaunted by ropes, tent-pegs, swarthy men, cages of blasé lions, insalubrious camels, and pessimistic monkeys, I came at last to an open space in the middle of the caravans and there

to my horror and grief I saw my angel sitting on the knees of the bulbous ring-master, who, in his shirt-sleeves, was imbibing stout from a black bottle. I suffered for at least a week from the hatred of life that is always brought about by a shock of disillusionment, and the spanking of a parental bed-room slipper.

I don't know whether it was a slight increase in wage or the return of a sense of humour — possibly the latter — which made those Paris electricians function again, but in the middle of the night I was brought into a sudden sitting posture in my bed by the switching on of all the lights in my room. The city was herself once more, and Time, the undefeatable, had recovered from its short and ludicrous setback. The following morning as Frohman and I were setting out to one of the oldest restaurants for *déjeuner* with the vacuum brought about by the scanty breakfast that goes with Continental life, he paused for several minutes in the foyer of the hotel in order to open a large handful of *petits bleus* that had been collected by his valet-secretary. By way of making conversation I asked Frohman as we went out if he had had good news from America of his numerous enterprises. With his characteristic twinkle he replied, "Yes. Every one of my plays is running to a loss." The only

three French words which Frohman ventured to indulge in during his visits to the country were "gassong", "frappay" and "addition." He insisted, however, on sitting through all the plays that he had marked out to see, having, of course, no more inkling of what they were about than was afforded by a hurried glance at a rough translation and my frequent whispers. All the same I think he was more interested and excited in being persistently puzzled than if he had known everything that was going on. For one thing there was an element of novelty about it, a pleasant sense of being abroad, and for another it held his interest to watch the facial expressions and gesticulations of the actors and make bets with himself as to what on earth they meant to convey. He was very often far from the mark and greatly disappointed when he was told precisely what it was all about. Imagination and a too familiar knowledge of plots combined to build up a story that seemed to him to be better than the real thing as it was discovered to him afterwards. In any case he was "kept guessing", and if a play failed to bring about that result he held it to be as dead as mutton. I am inclined to believe that he was right, though I know even less about the matter than he did, or any one else. He bought the English rights of "Chantecler", for

which everybody was bidding, more because so many rivals desired it than, I believe, because he wanted it for himself. Be that as it may, we went in to the Café de la Paix on the night of his purchase flushed with victory and discussed a cast for the American production while he smoked cigar after cigar and drank half a dozen glasses of orangeade, a more dangerous concoction than any of the synthetic or *wood-alcoholic* life-shorteners which have naturally sprung into being to undermine the constitution of America since prohibition stole upon its unprepared and incredulous inhabitants. For several hours we talked and talked, arriving at no definite conclusions. When, finally, he put forward an actor to play the king of the barnyard who seemed to me to be more hopeless than any of the others suggested by him, (a big, pompous, declamatory person, devoid of humour and yet endowed with that pathetic sense of self-importance and domestic rectitude which goes with all those masters of harem hen-runs being necessary) I murmured the magic name of Maude Adams, the ethereal, wistful, delicate little lady who had been born to play the part of the hen, to show the absurdity of his choice. Imagine my amazement and horror when he jumped at my paradoxical suggestion as though it were an inspiration and immediately

composed a hundred-word cable appointing that great little artiste to play the Cock. Thus was I unwittingly responsible for the epoch-making failure of a play which, in any case, was as impossible of translation into English as the raising of a Parisian eyebrow on the forehead of John Bull.

His courage, energy and power to go from one effort to the next in his eager search for success were never better shown than by the following expensive incident. We had both seen and fallen in love with a most ingenious and delightful farce in which Gallipaux gave one of his masterly performances of tragic comedy. I took it home to adapt, leaving the scene in its native atmosphere, and it was mutually decided that the late James Welch should be engaged to bring to life the leading part. His small, trusting and rather pathetic figure was exactly what was wanted. But on the night that the play was delivered a certain actor-manager who had been having a run of failures told his sad story to Frohman at supper, who, believing that the play was a certainty and being keen to have the opportunity to be connected with an actor of great achievements and the highest reputation, gave him the play to change his luck. This man, brilliant as he was in the creation of character parts, was totally unsuited to this one. He was utterly lacking in

the tragic sense and looked too well-fed and prosperous to gain the belief of the audience in the temptation to which he had succumbed. His methods were hard, too, and unresilient, and he was as unwhimsical as a retired major of the Indian Army with a bad liver and recurring gout. Money was lavished on the production and cast, and everybody was excellent except the leading man. Frohman attended several of the final rehearsals and without giving an inkling of his disappointment and his realization of the mistake that he had made worked hard and well. When we left the theatre after the dress rehearsal and dodged through all his favourite alleys to the Savoy Hotel I, who had made no comments either, asked him if he were going to be present at the opening performance. "No," he said, with the well-known twinkle. "Nor are you. We can't afford to waste the time. Spend the evening with me and we'll get to work on something else." The play died of rapid consumption.

I was not at all keen about adapting plays from the French. It seemed to me then, and I hold the same opinion now, that it was something in the nature of a literary crime to take a play peculiar to its birth-place, whose characters thought and spoke in the idiom of their language and regarded life from a point of view altogether differ-

ent from that of English-speaking people, and attempt to make it plausible by a process of elimination and alteration. Just as well attempt to reproduce the lightness and rhythm of a typical French melody by playing it with a fife-and-drum band. Then, too, the sticking of a French beard on an English face never makes an English actor into a Frenchman. The whole proceeding is rather dreadful. Under my unwritten agreement with Charles Frohman it was understood, however, that I was to adapt a certain number of foreign plays for him, and even if it went against the grain there was nothing to be said about it. It is true that I was able to make my choice of the innumerable plays by French authors on which he bought an option and among those upon which I laid a somewhat reluctant hand was "Arsène Lupin", a dramatisation of one of the famous stories by Maurice Leblanc by the fertile collaborators de Croisset and de Flers. There was an outburst of crook plays about this time and it seemed to Frohman that the part so charmingly played by the Seymour Hicks of Paris in the original version would be a good one for Gerald du Maurier, who had just come under his management. As a matter of fact any part became a good one then, as now, in the hands of du Maurier, an actor who has no equal for the most delightful

GERALD DU MAURIER.
As the British working man.

naturalness, humour, sincerity and strength, and whose acting is so true and delicate and spontaneous that he never seems to act. He is by all odds the finest actor on the English stage and if he elected to play Hamlet or Iago, David Garrick or Charles Surface instead of the modern parts that he prefers to appear in he would attract just as many eager admirers to his theatre as he does now in spite of the apparent desire of present day theatregoers for what he calls "thick-ear" plays. I took the bulky French script to Henley on Thames, commandeered my young brother who was a member of St. John's College, Oxford, and was rowing in his boat, hired a punt which was tied to the boom in the middle of the river and dictated my adaptation to him under a large umbrella with one eye on the practising crews. An ideal way, but for the typical absence of the sun, under which to work. I enjoyed that particular job very much indeed as it turned out, though it was by no means an easy one, worked about eight hours a day for a fortnight and dined every night with the necessary frugality of men in training with my brother's undergraduate friends. The play completed, I was not able to attend any of the rehearsals under the brilliant direction of Dion Boucicault because I was busily at work on something else. But I was present at the final

dress rehearsal when it was decided, at the last moment, that the bomb with which Arsène held up the police and his bitter enemy the detective, so well played by Dennis Eadie, should be a large black indiarubber ball. The effect of this bouncing thing, which was supposed to be a deadly instrument of destruction, both upon the police and the audience as Arsène escaped in a convenient lift was electrical and brought down a thrilling curtain to Homeric laughter. The play was a great success in England and America but I remember feeling extremely uncomfortable when I met the great dandy de Croisset and his partner de Flers on the stage and expected to be received with a shower of abuse at the many liberties I had been obliged to take with their play. They were, on the contrary, extremely felicitous and took back with them to Paris a scene which I had interpolated between Lupin and the detective. My name was not on the programme as adapter at the first performance and I sat with Tubby Turner, Cyril Maude's capable and faithful manager, who had n't the remotest idea that the hand of his companion was all over the piece. It was most amusing to listen to his comments as act succeeded act, as well as those of the critics who were equally in the dark. And when at the end Turner turned to me and said, "By Jove, we must get hold of the

man who did this. I wish I knew his name," and I gave it to him, mine was the final laugh that night.

I am the only author, I think, who ever adapted an American play into an English atmosphere. This curious experiment was made by the desire of Charles Frohman, upon Thompson Buchanan's "A Woman's Way" for the exploitation of the young actress who had made a great success in W. J. Locke's dramatic version of "The Morals of Marcus." As the play contained a delightful idea and was admirably constructed, it was only necessary to transfer the scene from New York to London, to translate the colloquialisms of the former city to those of the latter, to give the characters English names and English natures, and the thing was done. With a wonderful company supporting Miss Carlisle, who very bravely went through a rather drastic form of banting during the course of rehearsals, once again under the magic direction of Dion Boucicault, the result was a fair success. Somewhat recently I adopted this plan again with a play of my own called "Scandal", the original version of which was laid in an American atmosphere and played by, among others, Charles Cherry and Francine Larrimore, and produced by an unbusinesslike enthusiast who believed so little in its money-making chances

before production that he sold a hundred and fifty per cent of it to his more optimistic friends. Afterwards he enjoyed the Gilbertian satisfaction of paying a dollar and fifty cents to them for every dollar that he received. And he received a good many. Its long run landed him not in an ill-deserved prosperity but in the bankruptcy court. The English version of this play was produced and acted in by Arthur Bourchier soon after the Armistice. I was unable to be in London at the time to assist at the rehearsals and when, with great kindness and a gesture of triumph, he sent the manuscript to me across the unnecessary Atlantic it was so amazingly unrecognisable that it took my breath away. I was especially thrilled, if that is the word, to find that he had placed the fourth act on board a yacht instead of leaving it in the house of the heroine's father in order, presumably, that her dignified aunt might give an unedifying exhibition of mal de mer in order to brighten things up a little. Miss Kyrle Bellew played the headstrong heroine in London, and according to the pictures that I saw of her in the ever merry *Tatler* wore fewer clothes in the daytime than she did at night. The American version was tried out at Washington with Estelle Winwood and Warburton Gamble in the leading parts and was under the stage direction of Guthrie

McClintic. It was then leased to the Selwyns. It went off like a damp squib. I watched the first three performances with a growing dislike and after the Wednesday matinée, before which there had been a melancholy gathering of the company and an abortive attempt to pull the play together, I disappeared with a script, went home, cut out one act, and half a dozen quite superfluous characters and wrote an entirely new third act. The Selwyns had lost faith in the play, and so presently it was recast and reproduced and rehearsed in the little Belmont Theatre before being taken to an outlying city to be tried again on another dog. It did not seem to me that Francine Larrimore was suited to the part of the young autocrat and I had the temerity to say so on three separate and rather painful occasions, during the third of which I ventured to suggest that little Miss Larrimore was suffering from adenoids. There was a great explosion. The manager and all the members of his loving family argued with me at once, and while I sent people to scour New York to find another actress, Miss Larrimore clung to the part with so fine a courage and so clam-like a determination that the atmosphere of the empty theatre became charged with emotion. And when, the word "adenoids" having been reluctantly mentioned, she went at once to a throat-specialist,

was operated upon there and then and returned the next morning to rehearsal bloody and undefeated, I threw up my hands, flung my hat at her feet, and did everything in the world to make her happy in the part. I never expect to see again such bravery, such loyalty or such a splendid effort as hers, and it was she, with a cloth tied round her Titian head, who dressed the scenes and arranged the draperies on the Sunday of the opening performance in a great barrack of a theatre in Chicago until she had almost to be carried to her hotel for dinner and a little rest before going on the stage. Her belief in herself as the exponent of Beatrix Vanderdyke was more than justified by the extraordinary success that she achieved, and always when I heard her fighting for her life and the resuscitation of her pride in the third act of the play my spine crinkled and my mind went back to the distressing morning in the Belmont Theatre when she fought me inch by inch for the retention of the part. With a rare combination of comedy and tragedy Miss Larrimore is a young actress of genius who will, in a better part than that of the girl in "Scandal", jump to the very top of the dramatic tree.

CHAPTER FOUR

Schools of Playwriting. Granville Barker. The Haymarket Theatre and Cyril Maude. The Education of a Dramatist. Joseph Conrad. G. B. S. Again. Sir Arthur Pinero. Sir James M. Barrie. London Clubs. The *World*. William Archer and George Arliss. "A Celebrity at Home." Lord Roberts. The Garrick Club. The Duke of Fife. Max Beerbohm. Lady Jeune. "Back to the Army Agin."

I.

SINCE the time of my early struggles, which, I am happy to confess, only seem to be a few years ago, thanks probably to golf, over-smoking, continued struggles and optimism, many short cuts to the middle of the ladder have been established. Schools of journalism and of playwriting have opened up on every side to fit the present desire to escape apprenticeship and the fag of going through the mill to begin at the place where the hardened workman leaves off. Despite the spasmodic success of Professor Baker's efforts at Harvard University and those of Max Pemberton in London these short cuts lead for the most part into blind alleys and cul de sacs. I do not believe that

writing can be taught. It is born in a man like bowling with the left arm, a sense of direction, or going down to the sea in ships. It is something that has to be followed, slavishly, devotedly, as Sancho Panza followed Don Quixote — mostly with the same lean and heartbreaking results. The only school that is any use is the one provided by the professional practice of writing in which the best tonic is success, the finest lesson failure. I cannot help thinking that the embryo author who hopes that he may dodge the hard paving-stones of Fleet Street by attending school is likely to lose whatever originality he may possess and come out a plagiarist. His results are mainly based on imitation, the slavish copying of what is recognised as style, construction and technique. The several plays that have emerged from Harvard, for instance, are all the illegitimate offspring of quite unconscious masters, dressed in a composite of their wardrobes. One or two of them have been of mixed parentage, in whom it came as rather a shock to recognise the suggestion of Barrie's eyes under Wilde's forehead, Pinero's nose over Haddon Chambers' mouth, Maugham's ears on Ibsen's head, Eugene O'Neill's feet sticking out from Sudermann's trousers — a sight well calculated to fill a sensitive looker-on with great uneasiness. In short it is almost certain that if the

students of these schools ever come into the street they must do so on crutches, with the itching fingers of pickpockets.

Granville Barker, whom I remember best as an aloof, staccato, red-headed, gaunt young man, who had a habit of stalking endlessly up and down small spaces with his restless hands behind his back, his forehead puckered, his eyes snapping, looking more like a clean-shaven Abraham Lincoln than Napoleon Bonaparte and wearing a challenging smile as though to say "Yes, I agree. Nobody yet. But . . . " took no short cuts to fame. It is true that he studied the masters, the old masters, Wycherley and Congreve, Sheridan and Shakespeare, but his school was the theatre. He learned the few rough laws of playwriting on the stage itself, watching the nightly effects of lines and action on the people in front of the footlights, making up his mind as to the quickest way in which to establish character and atmosphere by getting into touch with audiences, obtaining their delighted response or unmoved silence, feeling his way practically and actually to a method of his own before he retired to the fastnesses to put his lessons into use. That this apprenticeship was valuable was proved by his many amazing plays, vital, curious and unlike anything else, especially by "The Madras House", "Waste", which

came unfortunately under the ban of the censor, and "Prunella", which is a gem, a masterpiece. It was proved, too, when he directed plays and discovered many of the dark horses who during the great days of Vedrenne and Barker at the Court Theatre ran past the post with flying colours. Following the same apprenticeship for the same reason, while I was writing young books, articles and dialogues for the papers, I met Granville Barker at the Haymarket Theatre when it was under the very prosperous direction of Frederick Harrison and Cyril Maude. It was Maude who very kindly permitted us both to "walk on" in "Under the Red Robe" by Stanley Weyman, in which he and Herbert Waring, Sidney Valentine, Hamilton Revelle, Bernard Partridge, who draws those brilliant cartoons in *Punch*, and the adorable Winifred Emery played the leading parts. I had just returned to London, from a short tour with a play called "Vanity Fair" which had nothing to do with Thackeray, during which I shared ideas and rooms with another earnest student of the pen, Norman Graham Thwaites, who, after serving through the South African campaign, wrote for the New York *World*, became one of Mr. Pulitzer's secretaries, was severely wounded as a Cavalry officer in the great war and went back again to New York eventually

to act as Assistant Provost-Marshal to the British Military Mission, a Lieutenant-colonel with a string of gallantly earned letters after his name and a hole in his neck. Sir William Wiseman and he were responsible for the British Secret Service in America before the United States poured its whole strength into the war and have every reason to be very proud of the splendid work they did in those most difficult days.

It was during my year at the Haymarket, studying audiences and analysing effects, walking on as a soldier in Richelieu's body-guard, if I remember rightly, and enjoying, with Colonel Walker-Leigh, a tremendous fight with a shouting mob which left us heaving under our armour, that I went to dinner one night with a party of friends who were on the verge of going to India with their regiment. The dinner began early, toasts were frequent and generous, and it was not until ten minutes before I was due upon the stage that I remembered my nightly struggle at the Haymarket. I fled from the table and the hotel, caught a prowling cab, drove hell for leather to the theatre, flung over my evening clothes the armour which a dresser held out to me at the stage door, and dashed through the fireplace into the middle of the mêlée, which had just began. The yells of the mob turned to screams of laughter when they saw my

black trousers and patent shoes beneath the collection of rattling tins and my wigless head almost completely swamped by a too large helmet, and it was only because Maude was a sportsman and had been very young himself that he let me off with a charming word of warning. They were good days, then, but it was a wonder that I didn't catch a permanent cold in my right eye by watching the audiences through a little private hole in the scenery while Granville Barker stalked up and down, torn by ambition and seething with inarticulate ideas.

The education of a dramatist is never complete, as the unexpected failures of such masters of the craft as Pinero, Somerset Maugham, James Forbes, Haddon Chambers and Henri Bernstein have shown us. For a play to catch the public fancy it need not have faultless construction, fine character drawing and brilliant dialogue, although its chances are all the better if it has. It must have a story, which is by no means the same thing as a a plot, and an old angle of a new idea or a new angle of an old one. Above all it must have something so human in it that the audience works as hard as the actors and never for an instant loses interest, sympathy and suspense.

By all odds the most valuable experience that a dramatist can undergo is that of directing his own

play with a caste made up of very experienced actors. Such a caste is far more difficult to work with smoothly than one composed of young enthusiasts, easy to mould. Leading men and women usually approach rehearsals through a maze of superstitions, shibboleths and ancient tricks. They are actors and therefore they must act. To conduct a play successfully through the shoals and bunkers, man-traps and pitfalls, egotisms and wounded vanities which necessarily belong to a production under such conditions is worth a lifetime of class work. I never shall forget a fortnight of agony that I endured when I endeavoured to direct an early effort of my own for a special charitable performance with a company consisting entirely of actors and actresses of vast experience and high standing who, although they considered my play worthy to appear in, all regarded me as an amateur of the rankest kind as, of course, I was. From the very moment that we started to work, first one and then another came to me in the kindest way all for my own good and not in the least, of course, for theirs, for the alteration of lines, of "business", of intonations, of positions, of plot, of character. Allowing myself to be torn this way and that, out of respect and awe of their greater knowledge, I took away a manuscript after the first rehearsal that was more like shredded wheat than a well-typed play.

Not only was this process of steady alteration continued day after day with a complete disregard of me both as director and as author, but presently whole mornings were spent in argument and attempted explanation by actors who began to discover that they were like scattered beads from a broken string, or isolated pieces in a picture puzzle. One by one, no longer on speaking terms with each other, they failed to arrive. Every morning the stage became less and less populated. There were fewer "Oh my dears" and "Oh my darlings", fewer little bags which had a fatal knack of disappearing to be found after an emotional hunt; fewer back-bitings and nasty whispers until, at last, with only the bright-eyed girl who was still perfectly willing to speak the lines of a maid which, long ago, had been removed from the script, I made a bonfire of the harrowed thing, went home for an original copy, engaged another company of less important people, and started all over again with a Pineroistic eye and a front of false marble like that of a Turkish bath. The young and inexperienced actor does not need direction half as much as the leading man no longer in the first, second or even third flush of giddy youth who has been in the habit of browbeating the humble author and the obsequious stage manager, and who brings to his work, in addition to an inability to learn his

lines, all the old bad tricks of barn-storming days and the determination to keep to the middle of the stage, like the boy who stood on the burning deck, even if he has killed the play stone-dead. The modern star, of course, stands in need of elementary teaching with every part that she essays. Otherwise the electric bulbs that blazen her name over the entrance to the theatre pop one after another, blackening the lives of manager, author, company, stage hands and all the other people who hang about the theatre for their daily bread.

Charity covers a multitude of sins and so the play about which I was writing was permitted to proceed by an audience of lenient and elderly ladies who either slept or talked. In hideous surprise at its fatuous stupidity and utter lack of grip, I watched it from the pit, and when the painful afternoon was over made a second bonfire and wrote it all over again. I was, by that time, almost a dramatist, though the second writing was never produced. The fifth was and so was the sixth, and both, bearing no relationship to each other, achieved "pronounced success", as advertisements have it. It 's a great life, if you don't weaken.

Somewhere or other, a day or two ago, I came across a brief but moving description of the way in

which Joseph Conrad was affected by the early rehearsals of his first play — one which, to everyone's great regret, failed to please, and died while it was teething. His impatience at the manner in which the actors necessarily fumbled over his lines and stood about in a condition of stodgy bewilderment, as they must always do before they are directed out of chaos, was described as being painful to watch. A tyro in the difficult and mostly heartbreaking game of playwriting, he seems to have expected his actors to fall into their places and characters immediately upon receiving their typewritten parts, and then, with uncanny intuition, to conduct themselves as though they had been working at the play for several weeks. He is said to have taken a seat under the very noses of a nervous and self-conscious company, who would naturally have given a great deal if the great man had seen fit to remain at home until they had had time to rough out the play, and then to have squirmed at wrong emphasis, clung to his umbrella in inarticulate horror at the frequent misunderstanding of his meaning, and wiped the globules of agony from his brow during the frequent moments when the inevitable irrelevances disturbed the smooth running of the rehearsal — the late arrival of the leading lady, for instance, the insistent chatter of the unoccupied members

of the company, the stalking-in of the theatre cat, which imagined that all those people had come together for no other purpose than to stroke his dusty and probably battle-marked back; the director's little outbursts of self-praise, the outcome of a very natural but none the less most pathetic endeavour to focus the metaphorical spotlight upon himself. Next time, should Conrad not be too discouraged for there to be a next time, he will go to the early rehearsals of the play, it is to be hoped, in a less exacting mood and with more active senses of humour and sympathy.

When that hardened veteran, George Bernard Shaw, attends the first rehearsal of a new masterpiece — all his plays are masterpieces — he goes among his carefully chosen company in the highest spirits, fully prepared to enjoy himself as much as they are bound to enjoy the arduous work to which they have been promoted above all other living artists. He is so contagiously amusing, so fatherly and benign, so full of quips and anecdotes, so deeply imbued with the certainty of having written something that must make yet another epoch-making sensation, that he gives out confidence with every one of his frequent laughs and starts the proceedings with a sense of enthusiasm which lives through all the rehearsals. His effect upon his actors, even when they find on their breakfast

tables his typewritten screeds of daily criticism and explanation dictated after each day's work, is that of an elderly god, who is guiding their destinies, moulding them into new shapes and instilling into their very souls a new point of view. The days preceding the eagerly expected first night with which it is an honour to be connected are touched with laughter, rare sympathy, gorgeous encouragement and praise, the most minute attention to detail — accent, clothing, manner, rhythm, scenery, properties — so that they pass with gaiety and keenness, and even when there is criticism, and there always is, it is so deft, so masterly and written or spoken with so unerring a sense of truth and brotherhood that the most sensitive, nervous or swollen-headed of its recipients is inspired rather than depressed or annoyed.

With Pinero, on the other hand, all is different. With him the rehearsals of a new play are preceded and gravely led up to by weeks of the most meticulous consideration of cast and scenery. A heavy, pall-like secrecy lies over the name and theme of the piece to which he has dedicated a large chunk of his life. There are numerous deep confabulations in private places followed by long and trying interviews with people who conform to type, or whose previous achievements on the stage warrant their being vaguely and timorously con-

sidered and looked over. Nothing is said to them of the characters to which they may be suited. No hint of the plot is permitted to creep out. Suavity and elusiveness are scrupulously maintained and the whole business is conducted with an air of mystery and importance such as goes, one imagines, with the making of an international treaty in Downing Street — unless one has read the latest volumes of Mrs. Asquith's autobiography, in which one finds that during the Prime Ministry of her husband, at any rate, everything was given away at her dinner table. At last, then, the vital matter of casting settled, there follows a pause of several days before the pompous ceremony of "the reading" to the assembled company who, before adjourning, are given a printed copy of the play under the solemn undertaking that no one else, not a soul, is permitted to open its pages. Precisely to the minute, alert, high-coloured, well-groomed, the Master enters the theatre for the first rehearsal. He wears his hat at a slight but never rakish angle and the air of a prosperous, rigid and vastly experienced builder who is about to superintend the erection of a mansion which shall take its place among the permanent landmarks of the nation. With a word here and a word there, a momentary melting toward the charming group of ladies who are shaking in their shoes, he settles

himself down at the table at which stand his director, stage-manager and call-boy, in other words the general staff, and the first day of a long, killing, and relentless six weeks begins. With the loyal help of his old friend, the director, Pinero proceeds to break down the intelligence, former experience, preconceived ideas, temperament, manners, and even nature of the victims whose lives are in his hands until the moment when they are no longer themselves, but the characters that he has conceived; until every tone, gesture, movement, and idiosyncrasy that he has insisted upon has been faithfully mastered; until everyone concerned, except Pinero, who looks more prosperous and highly-coloured than ever, is on the verge of collapse.

That is the moment chosen for the dress rehearsal, with all doors locked and with every peephole stuffed up. At the end of this event, there are a thousand notes to be read, a hundred points to be sharpened, one or two vital movements to be changed, several hours debating as to whether the arm-chair would be more effective six feet away from the piano or four feet and three-quarters, and as to whether the actor playing the son ought or ought not to wear a soft collar in his mother's drawing room, in London, during the season, with the possibility of people coming to tea, being, as he

is, an old Etonian who is still at Oxford, though at Magdalen and not at Balliol. But the company does get away in time for dinner, because Pinero always dines. There may be one, two, and even three other dress rehearsals during which certain unnoticeable but all-important changes may be made in the furniture, though seldom in the company, and never, never, never in the script. That is untouched, unprofaned, unbroken. For good or ill it goes to an audience in identically the form in which it left the author's desk for the printer's shop. No blue pencil shall have performed an act of desecration on any one of its sacrosanct pages. Opinions are not asked and not required, and if any creature, human or inhuman, unable to master the egotism that belongs to both, ventured to say, "Don't you think this . . ." or "Don't you think that . . ." the sudden and awful contraction of those thick black eyebrows would send him staggering into oblivion.

As for Barrie, he looks in to see how the rehearsals of his play shape with the air of a trespasser who feels that he would thoroughly deserve to have something flung at him for poking his nose into a place where he ought not to be. He has knocked off a little thing which, he seems to say, is "pairfectly awfu' " and which ought not to have so much money wasted upon it. If he were not always

produced by an able, affectionate and admiring director Heaven and the Haymarket only know in what a pitiable and battered condition his delicate, sensitive and fey-like work would find its way to the public. If it were first to be produced in Broadway . . .! His apologetic genius, his humble manner, his reticence and modesty have under them, all the same, an amazing knowledge of the theatre, and the bristles of a porcupine if anyone touches his work with a vulgar or misunderstanding finger. It was very amusing and, at the same time, very instructive, as proving the deep affection of all those who come under his quiet, inarticulate personality to see what happened one day at a rehearsal when he lost his favorite pipe. Unable to take any further interest in the proceedings he was joined in his feverish search first by the director and then by every member of the company and the theatre staff. The tragic cry went out—"Barrie's lost his pipe"—and such a thing as more work upon the play was utterly ignored and forgotten until, at last, the old, well-seasoned and probably gurgling briar was discovered, returned, reloaded and back in the quietly smiling mouth of the little Master of Thrums, the man who believes in fairies because they are his godfathers and godmothers, his friends, his children and his playmates.

II.

Living in the country, so that I might play golf or tennis every afternoon, take my dogs for runs behind a well-oiled bicycle and keep a friendly eye on rose trees, I had as little use for London Clubs as they probably had for me. I was, of course, a member of the Authors' Society and enjoyed its protection on several occasions, of a club in St. James's Square whose bed-rooms I used from time to time, and of other social clubs that I only lunched at when it was necessary to impress a publisher. I never dared to aspire to the haughty Savile, whose members were not mere writing men but literary gents and geniuses, and I never became a Savage, although as a guest I sometimes revelled in their delightful evenings and stirred uneasily under the cold proprietary stare of old Odell. Working every morning and every night, following a grim routine and doing without the luxury of waiting for inspiration which has a knack of coming to men who have got out of the habit of work, I met very few brothers of the pen, editors, critics, publishers, until I had the honour, of which I was very proud, to be elected to the Garrick. But some time before this event, and it was, to me, an event, as well as an excitement, I had become a rabid politician, Chairman of a local Unionist Association — to whom my first burst of

oratory in favour of Charlie Mills as a candidate for Parliament at a General Election might have been made in Greek, — an enthusiastic follower of Lord Roberts in his National Service scheme, the tragic and pathetic story of which was told by F. S. Oliver in his "Ordeal by Battle" — a frightful indictment of the egotism and blindness of the old bad men of politics who might have prevented the war — and the editor of the *World*.

My appointment to the old chair, upon which Edmund Yates had sat so successfully and which was made rather shiny during its twenty years of placid occupation by my kind friend William Drummond, caused as much astonishment to me as it did to everyone else. The paper was then in the hands of the four brothers Yates, who milked it very dry, and it was suffering from a lack of new pasture which made its milk a little thin and pale. I never quite understood why Drummond suddenly resigned, nor why I, after much turning over of better and more able names, was asked to step out of the ranks of regular contributors into the navigating room. In spite of my incessant work for Charles Frohman and a contract for a novel a year I jumped at the offer with the greatest eagerness, though with a certain amount of funk. For one thing I felt that my editorial inexperience and comparative youth would cause a shudder of ap-

prehension to run up and down the spines of the contributors, among whom the most necessary and distinguished were Frank Hill, the leader writer, William Archer, the critic, Mostyn T. Pigott, the poet, Lady Colin Campbell, Lady Jeune and Clotilde Graves (Richard Dehan). And for another I knew, well enough, that the perfectly natural jealousy of excellent men who considered that they had earned the right to the chair would be a difficult handicap to overcome. The faithful sub-editor, too, whose whole life had been devoted to the paper was, of course, set in his views. New and possibly daring blood would give a shock to his constitution. The secretary, who had been in the office from towzle-headed boyhood, the advertising manager and the office boy, who would never see forty again, all were accustomed to a steady jog-trot, an invariable routine. Not intending to edit the paper with my face to the wall, or to permit it to go along without the crack of the whip, a few jags at the mouth and a drastic though gradual change of passengers, I felt that my appearance was regarded by them with painful interest like that of a new and possibly erratic bowler to an old-fashioned county team. The *World* was something more in those days than a weekly journal for men and women of society and politics, which went into every country house and English club in every

British possession. It was an institution. Its form and tradition, facial expression, religion and clothes were as familiar to its readers as those of Lord Chesterfield to his circle of friends. To change the cut of its coat, the brim of its hat, the shape of its boots, the tone of its voice, the angle of its chin would be the act of a vandal, the work of an agnostic, the deed of a Bolshevik. I loved it too well to do any such thing, nor was I so unwise as not to know with what resentment my countrymen look upon innovations and a change of habit. But with a kind message from Buckingham Palace "to tell that boy to keep the paper bright" I proceeded at once to a tightening-up of the waist-line and the injection of a tonic. I also caused much heart-burning and agitation in the office by getting my brother Philip to make Will Crooks, M. P., a "Celebrity at Home", on a page which had never known anyone before who was n't in Debrett. It was so well done, however, and written with such charming humour and delicate character drawing that when the regular reader had recovered from the awful surprise of seeing such a name in the *World*, he read the article with pleasure, and sent me a post-card to say so. They all sent me post-cards from time to time, especially when I anticipated John Hare's knighthood by a year or so in a careless but prophetic moment and ignorantly

LYTTON STRACHEY.
Gazing back across departed years.

permitted a statement to stand as to there being three great oaks near the gateway of a certain Ducal Park instead of four. Men who have retired to the backwater of club life have lots of time on their hands. Instantly, too, I combed London for one of those idiot-philosophers, pleasantly illiterate after having been through Eton and the Army, who could just manage to string together enough words to fill a column in which to describe his point of view of life. Many of them tried their mounts without quite clearing the jump and so in desperation I became "The Man of the World" myself and signed his weekly effusion of confessions and comment "Brummell" because he professed to be an expert, among other things, in clothes. No one except the dear old sub-editor knew the secret of the authorship and so half a dozen of the sort of men I did my best to interpret stoutly maintained that they were he. They did not look in the least foolish, having long ago recovered from so childish a trick, when I collected these papers together and brought them out in book form over my name. Even then, in fact, one of them continued stoutly to maintain that he was the author and gave it out on every race-course that he had made a handsome present of his efforts to "dear old Cossie", who was frequently mentioned therein. He went back to the Army again

on the fatal Fourth of August and, like George Osborne at the Battle of Waterloo, fell face downwards with a bullet through his brain. Long rest his amusing soul. I went home one afternoon to go over the proof-sheets of this book and found my temporary valet, an Admirable Crichton who had been lent to me by Colonel Bradley-Dyne, sitting at my desk, with a funeral pile of cigarette stubs near his elbow, reading the last pages with raised eyebrows. I begged him to remain where he was and continue to the bitter end, and he condescended to do so, then rose and criticised the thing. "I strongly advise you not to publish it, sir," he said, with grave concern. "It ain't a gentleman's book." He had come to this drastic conclusion because Brummell dropped all his final g's, broke down his fourth wall and indulged in frequent bursts of almost illiterate eloquence. Despite this probably good advice the book went forward to the press and a critic less conventional than this gentleman's gentleman was kind enough to call Brummell "the Mr. Dooley of St. James's Street." Notwithstanding which I regret to say that my friend's good man never quite regarded me with the respect that he had had for me before. He continued, however, to play cricket in the village team and to get most correctly drunk every Saturday afternoon on warm beer.

Far from being disgruntled at my elevation to the poop, every contributor hastened very kindly to visit me on the first Wednesday afternoon to wish me luck and swear fealty to the cause. I shall never forget those nervous hours when they were shown up one after another to the prim editorial den in that narrow old house in York Street, Covent Garden, now empty, dusty and forlorn, and although I had written weekly dialogues and numerous stories for the paper for several years we came face to face for the first time under those trying and somewhat emotional circumstances. I felt like a sub-lieutenant who had been shoved over the heads of all his senior officers to the command of the ship. If they shared the feelings of such senior officers they did not let me know it, and as a matter of fact I don't think any of them envied me my job, because they all knew that the paper had been offered to Lord Northcliffe and refused, and might any day be offered to any syndicate with enough ready money to satisfy the proprietors who desired cash and were prepared to let the credit go. I gathered these facts then and could see that a huge effort would have to be made to rekindle the faith of advertisers by bringing the blood pressure of the old gentleman up to normal and adding a beat to his too slow pulse if he were to be saved from amalgamation with the weeklies

of the hoi-polloi. William Archer, who had stamped both feet on most of my plays, and in his capacity of the *World's* critic would certainly be obliged to repeat the painful process, caught the humour of the thing. In his dry Scotch way he said that he would be perfectly prepared to step aside when anything of mine was produced in London if I thought it desirable and thus he would be spared the unhappy necessity of jumping on his editor. I naturally refused to fall in with any such idea and had the dissatisfaction of being well trounced on several nearby occasions. William Archer, as everybody knows, has always been even more than a great dramatic critic, devotedly attached in his rigid immovable way to the theatre in all its forms. He is the man who put Ibsen on the English theatre map, thereby throwing Pinero out of sweet lavender into the seamy side of life. He is also the man who, after having spent the best part of a lifetime in telling dramatists where they went wrong and in writing handbooks in which to show them how to go right, suddenly took it into his head to prove his infallibility by writing a play himself, which, oddly and wonderfully enough, is a most remarkable success. In spite of this, or because of it, it is difficult to say, it is a very admirable piece of work, exciting, dramatic, having an original idea and a finely drawn leading part

which is played by George Arliss in his most suave and subtle manner. When, after having seen "The Green Goddess" in New York, where it was beautifully produced by Winthrop Ames, I went round to congratulate Arliss on his performance I found that he had fitted up his rooms behind the stage like those of a Rajah, so that he might get into the proper Indian mood while dressing to go on. He does not carry his artistic thoroughness so far as actually to colour himself all over every night but, metaphorically, he is as thoroughly and completely Eastern as Kooch Behar during every performance, and even his wife must find it difficult to recognise in him the gentle, cultivated, charming Englishman that he really is. He has created a very gallery of exquisitely finished portraits during his long and successful career, my favourites among them being Beaconsfield in Louis N. Parker's play and the wool-gathering Professor in Barrie's delicious "Love Story."

During the first or second week of my editorship a very well-known novelist whom I had never met and who had never heard of my existence sent his bland and glossy secretary to see me with a note to say that, with the desire to give the paper a decided lift and me a feather in my cap, he would consent to be made a "Celebrity at Home" if I would send a man with a more than usually bril-

liant pen to see him in his London house. On the list of futures for this page his name had never been entered, but, not so much out of loyalty to my craft as because I scented fun, I complied with his demand. When the result of the interview had been written and printed the proof was sent to the novelist in question and duly brought back by the perpetually bland and glossy youth. I could hardly believe my eyes when I found that the article had been almost rewritten on the proof and at every mention of the novelist's name such enthusiastic adjectives as "great, distinguished, epoch-making, brilliant, historic", had been blatantly looped in. Not content with this he had altered the plain words house to mansion, workroom to library, backyard to garden, drawing-room to ball-room, a small collection of modern paintings to a gallery of old masters. His readers had become his world-wide public, with posterity the limit, and, in short, every line on the whole of the page had been festooned with the sort of unblushing exaggeration which is only associated with a publisher's preliminary announcement of a second-rate book, or with the flamboyant advertisements of an American car. The whole thing was utterly impossible and preposterous and I hinted as much to the secretary of this pachydermatous person, whose answer was, however, that the ar-

ticle must be printed as altered or not at all. The fun that I had somehow scented was well in sight, and even the unadventurous sub-editor agreed with me when I sent word to say that "I would be quite delighted to insert a facsimile of the decorated proof-sheet in the next issue of the paper." Almost before the office had recovered its breath, however, the secretary came bounding back from the great novelist's mansion, white to the lips, begging me to believe that posterity's friend would be only too glad and thankful if I would regard the alterations and additions to the original article as though they had never been made. Thus, simply because we of the *World* then put into practice Portia's immortal appeal to Shylock, London was deprived of the laugh of her life.

III.

Other amusing incidents followed in rapid succession to lighten the monotony of editorial work, among which was the visit of a Unionist member of Parliament with a document sworn to by four British officers in which it was set forth that a certain ubiquitous politician, son of an even more brilliant and ubiquitous minister, had stolen their plan to escape from the Boers, used it, and left them high and dry. It was a document, I was assured, which would not only quadruple the cir-

culation of the *World* but put a full stop to the career of the politician who has since occupied nearly every seat in the various Cabinets of several Governments except that of Prime Minister. Acting on the advice of the cautious sub-editor, whose grey hairs stood literally on end, I consulted our lawyers with this bomb in my hand and was told with all the painfulness of legal humour that although it was perfectly true that its publication would quadruple the circulation of the paper it would put a full stop to mine. Criminal libel is a nasty thing to face, and I am thankful to say that I curbed the editorial itch for a "scoop." Later the politician brought an action against someone less well-advised and it is hardly necessary to say that he left the court without a stain upon his character.

I was visited a little later by an undoubted Duchess in a carriage which caused a little crowd of Covent Garden hangers-on to collect in York Street, which always smelt of cabbages, who came in person very graciously to invite me to dinner to meet other undoubted flowers of the aristocracy — those who had not been married from the chorus as was the new and rapidly growing fashion of that time — if — there was, of course, an if — I would print a long and detailed description of her daughter's presentation frock in a prominent part of the

paper. But as frocks were almost the only things that we did n't go in for the dinner never came off. Another time one of the Irish members of Parliament broke into my room with a stick like Harry Lauder's and threatened to beat the life out of me if I did n't desist from holding him and his fellow members up to ridicule in my editorial notes signed Atlas, and for half an hour stamped about, yelling the roof off, and hitting everything within reach except me. I told him that it would give me much joy to throw him down the narrow flight of stairs on to the mat at the bottom, and I presume that he saw that I could, and so, eventually, the cyclonic disturbance was followed by the usual Hibernian sunshine over two whiskeys and sodas in a nearby hotel. I continued to hold him and his friends up to ridicule and he and they continued to refuse Home Rule for Ireland and thus allow England to rule her own home.

At the moment when I undertook to become Atlas I offered the *World* to Lord Roberts as the organ of National Service, and it was with his consent, and under his personal direction, that a long series of articles headed "Our Unpreparedness for War" was written, which formed the basis of his final appeal in the House of Lords. He was, it will be remembered with shame, dismissed as an old man in his dotage, and I hardly like to think

what must be the feelings of Lord Haldane, Mr. Asquith, Mr. Lloyd George and company every time they pass the Cenotaph in Whitehall or gaze with horror and apprehension at the abyss into which Europe has fallen headlong as the result of their blindness and *laissez faire*. The least said about this, probably, the better, but when I look back at my many meetings with Lord Roberts, during those days of his eager activity, and remember his passionate desire to make England strong enough to prevent the possibility of the frightful and useless holocaust which has thrown civilisation into the sort of ruins that is caused by a gigantic volcanic eruption, the blood rushes to my head, and the temptation to be indiscreet is almost more than I can withstand. Like all the men of his rare type Lord Roberts was very simple, downright and humble. Afraid of nothing when he carried on his job, he was curiously frightened of cats, bishops, politicians and Lady Roberts. He dined once at the country house of a mutual friend, rose in the middle of dinner, ran out into the garden and stood trembling on the lawn because a yellow-eyed Angora kitten had poked an inquisitive head round the door. Somewhat to my surprise he preferred the Athenaeum Club to the Naval and Military, and as the former held peculiarly inhospitable ideas in its treatment of guests I had to sit with him on

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE.
"Um! What am I going to say next?"

an extremely hard sofa at the top of a flight of stairs whenever he asked me to meet him there to discuss propaganda. I asked him once why he chose that pompous place rather than a more comfortable Service Club, and he said, "Well, you see, I know almost everything there is to know about the men of my own profession, but nothing at all about the men of the others. I like to watch them moving about." They were in the nature of curiosities to him like kangaroos and seals to a small boy, and I must confess that two or three of the learned and distinguished gentlemen who haunted the Club bore a marked resemblance to those very nice beasts. They have joined their fathers now, so there can be no resentment at this by no means invidious remark. He dined with me one evening at a club of my own, with several of his brother generals who supported his views, and when he entered the dining-room a little late every man in it immediately sprang to his feet. Intensely disconcerted and abashed he said to me reproachfully, "Hamilton, why did you arrange a thing like this!" I assured him that of course I had done nothing of the sort, but that it was a spontaneous mark of the deep respect and admiration in which he was held, but I don't think that he got over it during the whole of the meal.

I took him to see Harry Tate at a music hall one

afternoon to remove the nasty taste of a Parliamentary attack, and he laughed so much that he almost rolled out of his seat. His old deep-set blue eyes, that had a longer sight than most men's, were red with tears when he left the place.

Once he explained to me with great feeling why he had not brought the South African War to a quicker termination. He hated men to be wounded and lose their lives, he said, and over and over again, when he saw himself described in the Liberal papers as a jingo and a firebrand, he used to writhe under such a stupid and deliberate misrepresentation and cry out, "Good God, don't these idiots know that I 'm not demanding preparation so as to go to war but in order to prevent it?" He was a big enough man never to say "I told you so" when the day came at last, and when he died it was among the troops who knew him better than the intellectual jackasses who liked to imagine that war had been outlived as a bad habit. I was not the only man who wept when Bobs went West.

I said just now that my election to the Garrick Club was, to me, an event as well as an excitement, because, on the day that I came up for election, Beerbohm Tree gave out that he was going to drop a black ball in the box. A man who loved to poke fun at all and sundry, and pretty rapier-like fun it was, it appeared that he had taken um-

brage at one or two of the would-be jokes that I had made about him in the *World*. Especially at the one that I cracked, obviously enough, in commenting on his forthcoming production at His Majesty's theatre of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and which, if I remember rightly, ran something like this. "Earnest students of the drama who have seen most of Mr. Tree's parts will next week have the intense satisfaction of seeing his 'Bottom.'" It was Seymour Hicks, already a member of the Garrick, who cleverly manoeuvred the irate Tree away from the scarcely deserved black ball, and so I got in, and a welcoming luncheon was given to me in the little room that is thickly hung with pictures of Charles Mathews and has known so many cheery and wonderful gatherings. I sat between Lord Esher and Kennedy Jones, opposite to Barrie and Frohman, and in addition to the jovial Hicks there were present at the round table the ever-kind Arthur Chudleigh, Sir Harry Poland, Sir James Mathews, afterwards the Public Prosecutor, and I believe Gerald Duckworth, the publisher, the brothers Spottiswoode, Lord Cork and Colonel Chator. I don't remember whether W. J. Locke and A. E. W. Mason were there, but both of them were extremely kind to me, as, indeed, were H. B. Irving, the image of his father, Marshall Hall, the handsomest man

at the Bar, Comyns Carr whose satire was sharp enough to shave an elephant, Roland Berkeley who wrote several very charming things for the *World* and Lemuel K. Bangs, the London representative of Scribner's, who knew more about the haunts of Dickens than any living man and might easily have stepped out of the pages of one of his books with his coat that was several sizes too large for him, hair that was parted at the back of his head and conducted round over each ear, a routine as invariable as that of a sewing-machine, and a sunny nature that made him a close relation of Mr. Cheerable. Frank Richardson, an odd creature who was the inventor of the beaver habit and wrote whole novels about what he revelled in calling face fungus, was very friendly too. In those days W. J. Locke was, as he still is, probably the one English novelist to be read by canons, schoolmasters and inveterate maiden ladies of high culture without being ashamed to admit it, and I used to think that he bore a close resemblance to all these three himself. Very precise, neat and classical, he seemed to come to the Club as an Eton master in Holy Orders goes to a smoking concert, or to a bridge-party in which there are a not too linguistically careful Master of Foxhounds and a beautiful lady or two of rather chameleonic pasts. As for A. E. W. Mason, with his glistening eyeglass, his

H. B. Irving as Hamlet.
A chip of the old block.

frequent bursts of laughter, his thick black hair, his way of tearing upstairs for no apparent reason, his whole-hearted delight in everything that was decently good, it was worth going to the Garrick to catch his optimistic infection, and not in any language has a better story than his "The Four Feathers" ever been told. As a member of Parliament he succeeded in looking the very picture of an embryo Prime Minister, but no man of his sunny nature and keen sense of humour could stand that atmosphere long. Locke and he burst into playwriting from time to time with the usual varying success.

At the luncheon the conversation drifted to the subject of halfpenny newspapers and I let myself out in absolute condemnation of those snippety, sensational things which I said had the same effect upon a decent street as a jangling tramcar, only to be covered with confusion when Lord Esher dug me in the ribs with his elbow and whispered that the man to whom I was talking was a director of the Northcliffe Press.

A delightful club, the Garrick, homogeneous to an extraordinary degree, with as many old masters on the walls and occupying its most comfortable chairs as are to be found in the National Gallery and any other similar building in London. The first time I ventured to enter it, being commanded

to give the password, so to speak, to old Monkey-Brand, the inveterate doorkeeper, I went up the wide staircase timidly to the morning room, but turned tail and fled when half a dozen prehistoric peeps stuck their heads antagonistically round several high-backed chairs and glared. It was a week before I dared to try it again. But when one had found one's feet and been present at half a dozen of its gorgeous Saturday nights and witnessed the sight of high pillars of the law and letters, stage and diplomacy, art and science, medicine and music, departing in the chilly small hours in the body, and on the roof of a four-wheel cab, one warmed into confidence, and crossed its friendly threshold with more courage. The story runs that Barrie, going one day to speak to Bernard Shaw at a table in the coffee room near the window, looked for a moment at the curious mess upon which the Master was browsing, and said, in his rolling Scotch, "Oh, tell me, Shaw. Have ye eaten that, or are ye going to?"

By no means the least important and picturesque person in the Club was the steward, who, if he had been an actor, would obviously have been cast to play the parts of peers. Like a large, grave and responsible guardian angel he flitted silently from room to room seeing to it that the servants left nothing undone. The only time that I en-

tered into lengthy conversation with him was when I went into the club just before midnight on a Saturday out of the season and asked if any of my friends were there. "Yes, sir," he said, "his Lordship. Seated in the Corfee Room, sir, with three large whiskeys and sodas, sir, 'a talkin' to 'isself, sir, and I don't think he knows that he's alone." And when, knowing that I was, and not very keen on remaining so any longer, I joined his Lordship at the deserted board I don't think he knew that I was present, judging by the half tearful *apologia pro vita sua* that he continued to indulge in and to which I considered it discreet to leave him as quickly as I could.

One other amusing though rather shattering incident connected with the Garrick Club occurs to me. For some reason or other the usually punctual Continental train was late one inclined to be foggy afternoon and so instead of going to my rooms in the Albany to read accumulated letters and get unpacked, I drove to the Club for dinner and all the latest news. It was the time when Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Lloyd George President of the Board of Trade and Mr. Haldane Secretary of State for War, a month before Mrs. Asquith wrote in her diary that "Henry came into my room at 7 : 30 and told me

that Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had sent for him that day to tell him that he was dying. They had talked for over an hour and Henry's voice shook as he repeated their conversation to me. . . . Henry was deeply moved when he went on to tell me that C. B. had thanked him for being a wonderful colleague, 'so loyal, so disinterested, and so able.' At this I put my arms around his shoulder and we cried together." And when Sir Arthur Godley wrote to "My dear Margot" and summed up the situation of the Liberal Party at the moment with a passage from one of Sydney Smith's essays — "The sloth spends its life in trees, but what is most extraordinary he lives not *upon* the branches, but *under* them. He moves suspended, eats suspended, and passes his life in suspense, like a young clergyman distantly related to a bishop."

IV.

Welcomed back to town by the faithful janitor of the club, I found the Coffee Room strangely empty, most of the members having dined, and sat at a table in the body of the charming room with all its gorgeous pictures, within earshot of Captain Robert Marshall and Comyns Carr, both of whom, alas, have followed "the thick footprints of departed men." I ordered dinner, tilted

the evening paper against a water bottle and prepared to kill two birds with one stone — eat and read. I was tremendously interested in the political situation, especially as it had to do with the national service scheme to combat the German menace, and with Haldane at the War Office and Asquith at the Treasury there was little hope of that. Almost immediately someone touched me on the shoulder and in a crisp, high-pitched voice asked if he might take the next chair. I looked up and saw the vaguely familiar face of a neat, soldierly-looking man with a white moustache and an open-air complexion, who was, I presumed, a retired colonel, or, from his well-practised smile, a shining diplomatic light. Of course I said yes, though the paper became useless, and I wondered, with a touch of inexcusable impatience, why any of the other chairs would n't have done as well. Chirpy and voluble, hopping alertly from one subject to another like a sparrow from branch to branch, my unrecognized dinner-disturber gave me cause to disagree with almost everything he said. Our views were diametrically opposite on preparedness, books, music, golf, racing, the theatre, religion, food, from all of which he went, lightly, rather wittily, and with all the resilience of a ball.

With the respect that is due to a man old enough

to be one's father, but with perfect frankness, I put my views and argued my points as I should have done if the man had been my father, and we enjoyed the most good-natured series of quarrels from one end of dinner to the other. From time to time I noticed expressions of acute and even painful amusement on the faces of Marshall and Carr, but naturally imagined that they were adding to each other's stock of billiard-room stories and thought no more about it. I noticed, also, that my more and more cheerful companion took obvious delight in raising arguable questions and laughed like a subaltern when I let myself out. We got along so well, in fact, in this paradoxical manner, that when I rose to leave the club he asked me to order cigars and coffee in the lounge so that we might continue to wrestle until he had to go. I longed to read my paper and carry on alone, but the insistence of this charming person was not to be resisted. Marshall and Carr followed me out and asked me in the same breath if I knew to whom I was talking, and I said no, I did n't, and I did n't care. A retired colonel, I supposed, a thorough sportsman, with a most infectious laugh. Why? But the question remained unanswered. My friend was at my elbow, and on we went again, Marshall and Carr in earshot, enjoying the severest twinges of pain. Fi-

nally we parted, warmly, with a long handshake, and with a "If you ever happen to be in Brighton I insist on your coming to lunch. Don't forget, now." But as I intended to do my best not to happen to be in Brighton what was the use of remembering?

The laughter that followed his exit shook the pictures in their frames. It was minutes before either Carr or Marshall could stammer out a word. They rocked and rolled with laughter, choked and wept with laughter, and left me cold. "Let the doors be shut upon him that he may play the fool nowhere but in's own house," I said to myself. "I've put my foot in it somewhere and I shan't be allowed to forget." And then Carr became convalescent for a moment. "The retired colonel with whom you have been wrangling all the evening," he said, "and treating like an Aunt Sally when you should have bowed and agreed with all his views, happens to be the Duke of Fife and the president of the club. That's all." And having played his ace of spades with which he expected me to dig a hole into which to creep in shame, off he went again. According to the tenets of those good old days I had, of course, committed an appalling breach of etiquette which left me rather blown. The story that ran through the club like wildfire might have been told by Falstaff and made the thing infinitely worse. It seemed that I had

not only told the almost Royal Duke to go to the devil, but, throwing the last remnants of etiquette aside, had flung him over my shoulder and rolled him all over the floor. But the sequel put me one up on Carr and Marshall and proved that my retired colonel was a man of humour. At the annual meeting of the club, when he entered the room followed by the committee and saw me standing stiffly among the other stiff-backed men, he held out his hand with the familiar practised smile and a "Hullo, my dear fellow, you never came down to Brighton to continue our delightful talk."

In the last Christmas number of the *World* for which Drummond was responsible I wrote a long and absolutely mad skit in dialogue called "The Danger of Innocence", in which, under the most diaphanous disguises I caricatured in words many of the people who were then notoriously in the public eye. With the laudable idea of piling Pelion upon Ossa Drummond asked Max Beerbohm to illustrate it with his inimitable caricatures in black and white.

As one of his victims I went to tea with the last of the dandies who at that time, I think, was putting together a weekly page of mosaics of the choicest marbles for the *Saturday Review* about plays, so that he might look me over. But he never looked at me at all. He ambled about, dressed to

the most utter perfection, small, gentle and cherubic, and gazed at the wall, at the carpet and out of the window while he talked about cabbages and kings with the musical rhythm of a running brook. This disconcerting but delightful process was, if I remember rightly, repeated several times, during which, being unobserved, I made a caricature of Max. When his was delivered of me I was aghast to find that he had seen me through the back of his head as a broad-shouldered dwarf in a much waisted overcoat, a Wellingtonian nose and a John Bull tall-hat. I might have been a pawn belonging to a set of grotesque chessmen especially designed for the relaxation of the alcoholic inmates of an inebriate sanitorium. One rarely sees one's self as others see one and so I am afraid that he was right. Someone stole my caricature of him, or I would have used it here. No longer, alas, is he to be seen at London first nights with a gold-headed cane almost as long as himself, snow-white buckskin gloves, several inches of collar, a miraculous waistcoat and a very tall tall-hat which must have descended to him from a Georgian blood. He is a countryman today and the drama of life absorbs his interest now.

I greatly enjoyed my time on the *World*, during which I worked far harder than the mythical nigger who, as a matter of fact, slacked when there

was no stern eye upon him as he always does. Continuing to write plays and books and contributing something like three thousand words to the paper every week-end, I attended the office mostly when everybody had left it, sometimes letting myself in with a latchkey at an hour when the market carts were beginning to rumble into Covent Garden to disgorge the fruits and vegetables of the earth. I cannot claim to have discovered any colossal geniuses, but I am able to say that I encouraged many young writers in their work. I twisted several serious men into humourists — mere humourous persons as Dr. Johnson called them — and printed the first dialogue that Gilbert Frankau ever wrote — a brilliant blaze of verbal fireworks and set pieces, far more Oscar than Wilde. He had not then perpetrated his Byronic adventure that amazed London in "One of Us" and was squeezing his artistic soul into the cramped quarters of a successful cigar business out of which he has long since emerged in a blaze of literary triumph.

I cut down the long-winded social stuff little by little in order to make more room for satire and light-hearted things, bearing in mind the fact that King Edward did us the honour to read us in the bath. I also paid great attention to new books, and permitted Lady Jeune, whose copy no living

creature except one valuable printer could ever read, to babble almost to her heart's content. In one of her "Belles Letters", which nobody outside the office knew that she wrote, I remember that, in referring to Queen Alexandra, she said, "Poor sweet dear thing. When she came in to declare the Bazaar open to the public she *did* look so dowdy and bored." And the problem was whether to let it stand or cut it out. A first hand observer of all the important social events, she thought aloud in her weekly contributions, and when her untranslatable pages came back from her pet printer duly set up I metaphorically took off my coat and actually gave a new point to a large blue pencil. Never spiteful or really unkind, her frankness was appalling in a world of very thin skins. Her comments were much more valuable than those of Pepys and as a faithful record of the history of her time deserve a permanent place in the British Museum. But they have never appeared in book form.

Every Monday morning as regularly as clock work it was my duty to attend at the printing office of Eyre and Spottiswoode in one of the courts off Fleet Street to go through the wearing and domestic process of putting the paper to bed. As I always had far more matter than was needed, the inevitable juggling feat faced me of pouring sev-

eral quarts of good liquor into an unexpanding pint pot. Going over a mass of proof to watch for split infinitives and the small inaccuracies that took an impish delight in escaping a more and more blasé eye left me limp and eye-sore at the end of the day. I shall never forget one of these when, from force of habit, I drove from Fleet Street to Paddington station and found myself dining in solitary fatigue at home in the country when I ought to have been at an important function at the leading woman's club in Piccadilly, the Lyceum. It was half-past nine when the telephone bell awoke the echoes and an indignant voice asked me if I was aware of the fact that a hundred and fifty literary lights, including Anthony Hope and May Sinclair and probably W. L. George, were waiting, hungry and with growing impatience, for my attendance at a dinner at which I had undertaken to launch a bitter attack at clubs for women. I nearly jumped out of my skin. It was impossible to get back to town under an hour and a half and all I could do was to send the most abject apologies to the chairwoman and ask that, in extenuation of my inadvertent rudeness, it should be explained to her that a terrible accident to one of the printers that afternoon, in which he had lost his right hand, had contributed to distract my attention from the engagement. To add to my feelings of

horror the next morning brought a flood of sympathetic telegrams from the members of the dinner party, at which none of the prepared replies to my speech were able to be delivered, expressing infinite regret at my being one hand short, and that my writing hand. It dawned on me at once, of course, that either because he had misunderstood me or in order to instil a touch of drama into an exploded affair, the Club porter had turned the accident to the unfortunate printer into an accident to me. Imagine what it meant to sit down and write a pile of letters not only in explanation of that mistake but of the one, far worse, which made me ruin the dinner. Whenever I passed the Lyceum Club after that I did so on the other side of the street, close to the railings of the Park, feeling certain that a well justified loose brick would fall off the roof on to my head if ever I gave it the chance. I rather believe in loose bricks and poetic justice.

With the loyalty and enthusiasm of the old contributors and the young and lively blood that was injected into the veins of the *World* by the new ones, circulation improved and the advertising pages became very much more healthy. For my own part, having a deep affection for the paper, I strained probably far too many nerves to place it on the sort of paying basis that would restrain its

four proprietors from offering it for sale again. That year, indeed, was one in which every man Jack of us settled down to a grim tug-of-war in the fervent hope of pulling the proprietors over the mark. Every possible economy was made, the rates of payment were carefully reduced, and whenever I met a nice, quiet, solidly rich man, who had no social, political or financial axe to grind — and I did meet two or three — I did my best to persuade him that it would be impossible to indulge in a more delightful hobby than in that of becoming proprietor of what we regarded as our *World*. Eloquence must have failed on each occasion, and on the day that I took to the office, in desperation, a cheque representing every penny I could scrape together with a sum of money lent by one of my brothers with which to buy a share of the paper I was put to one of the greatest disappointments of my life. I heard unfamiliar voices in the room above my own as I sat working rather late, smelt the aroma of strong cigars, and finally listened, with a sense of impending trouble, to a leaving procession of feet. There was a short and uneasy silence. Then my door opened, and with a rather pale face and a tragic expression the secretary came in and told me that the proprietors had seen fit to sell the paper, literally over my head, to Lord Northcliffe, who had refused to

touch it a little over a year before. The policy of trying to spoon up spilt milk had never seemed to me to be anything but a waste of time so I bottled up a rush of Saxon words. The following morning, after several brief and bitter telephonic talks to distressed contributors, who had been quick to catch the rumour of the sale, a confident Amalgamated Press young gentleman entered the editorial room without the usual deference to etiquette, and issued orders, sitting on my desk. And then I spoke. In fact I did more than speak. I evicted. And when I received a brief notification of the fact that my contract had been purchased with the paper, I replied, with equal brevity, that there was a slight mistake. I pointed out that I was not included with the furniture and effects. I carried on with my dear old friend the sub-editor, whose future, at a ripe age and set habits, looked very black, until Lord Northcliffe, who was not on speaking terms with me, sent in Sir Gerald Campbell to carry the lighter burden of the now moneyed Atlas. Then followed a quick succession of editors, among whom, if I remember rightly, were Lord Winterton, M. P., Keble Howard, the novelist and playwright, and eventually young Flateau. But under the dynamic régime of the Napoleon of the Press the poor old *World* became more and more like Joseph in a

coat of many colours, and finally it changed hands again and was put to bed for the last time before the end of the war. It was a sad moment when I said goodbye to all my fellow tuggers, most of whom found themselves at a loose end, as I did, and my parting from the sub-editor was not made without emotion. Thus ended the most strenuous chapter in my career of ups and downs, in which I was so loyally supported by William Archer, Mostyn T. Pigott, Lady Colin Campbell, Lady Jeune, and all the other members of the old *World* coterie as well as those who joined up under me. It was back to the Army agin, Sergeant, back to the Army agin — the Army that consisted of men who scratched a living as free lances, writing novels and plays and such.

CHAPTER FIVE

Windsor Castle. Viscount Churchill. "Duke's Son." Pierre Berton and "Bridge." "Plain Brown." "The Blindness of Virtue" and Owen Nares. The Lord Chamberlain and the Censorship. Major A. Hamilton Gibbs, M. C. The Shadow of War. A Covent Garden Ball. The *Tuesday Review*. Compton Mackenzie. The O.U.D.S. Lady Dalton Fitzgerald.

I.

On the night that Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Bourchier gave a command performance of "The Merchant of Venice" at Windsor Castle with their company from the Garrick Theatre I dined there among a number of other guests. I was told by Lord Churchill that I might get there early and prowl about that grand old place that I had seen so often from the Thames, and from the winding cobbled streets of Windsor whose placid life is only churned into excitement when a Royal function brings out soldiers on horse and foot, the Household Brigade and the Guards with their marvellous drill and bearing, or there is a race meeting on that extremely pleasant course. I

rarely missed one, a very easy drive from my house. King Edward and Queen Alexandra were, I think, entertaining the King and Queen of Denmark, and it was as well, perhaps, that the play chosen for the occasion was not "Hamlet." The choice was, in any case, a good one, not only because there are few in any language so fine, so dramatic and so moving, and with such delicious comedy, but because Arthur Bourchier's "Shylock" was the best thing that he ever did among his versatile list of parts, except possibly the gentle, charming Curé in "The Bishop's Move" by John Oliver Hobbes, in which he played like a Frenchman, so delicate and certain was his touch. His was a sound and admirable company, too, most of his actors having served in the Benson school, as all the best of the actors of that period had done, except du Maurier, who is a born actor, and Lawrence Grossmith, who had it in his blood. I liked Violet Vanbrugh's "Portia" very much. It was picturesque, and full of warmth and feeling. They were all there worrying a good deal as to how on earth to get their scenery, which was heavy, on to the just erected stage, and being looked after by old Lord Clarendon, with his bangles, and his son, Lord Hyde, both attached to the Household, as Lord Churchill was.

I very quickly discovered that there was not

ARTHUR BOURCHIER AS HENRY VIII.
In his own beard.

much prowling to be done though. Every time I walked off the beaten track and endeavoured, with the attempted air of one who belonged in some capacity to the Castle, to explore, out popped a red-coated, tall-hatted servant with a cold and fishy eye and a no-trespassing hand. There were sentries everywhere too, with fixed bayonets, not very nice things on which to be stuck. But I was permitted to dress in the Tower from whose narrow slits of windows there was a fascinating and unusual view of the town. "How pleasant to see the sky through the trees. But only the angels see the trees through the sky." I felt rather like a very temporary angel then, perched up in that high spot.

Dinner was not served at one long table, but at a number of small ones in the dining hall, so that it looked like a restaurant, but for the age and beauty of the room, and at the moment when the Royal party entered all the lights flashed up and made the gold plate glisten on the screens. In the middle of dinner the ancient custom took place of drinking wine with the King, a somewhat nervous and disconcerting custom which kept one on edge until the moment came, of which one was duly informed by one or other of the gentlemen in waiting, who slipped about in the brown Windsor uniform in pumps. Then, catching the

King's also duly informed eye, the deed was performed, and the remainder of dinner eaten with an immediate return of confidence. The people at my table and others nearby were the King's neighbours, on the list, "landed gentry" as the papers had it before the war altered all that and put their houses on the market, who lived between Windsor and Ascot. The Headmaster of Eton was there, I believe, and the officiating clergyman. At the proper moment the Kings with the Queens walked to their gold chairs facing the stage in the old room, hung with full length portraits of departed kings, and I went too, among the also-rans. Not in order to escape from listening to the play — I had heard it — but because I was keen to find the room and table at which, as my grandfather had told me, Macaulay, invited to dine and sleep, had written on the Castle note-paper to his dunning trades-people a reproachful line or two, I left the room. I thought the idea a good enough one to follow. I tiptoed off, went across a wide place on the polished floor of which the lights in the cases of pistols threw long streaks, and wandered into a room covered with painted fishes, with a fine old mantelpiece; and as I was enjoying a cigarette, in lonely guilt, a magnificent person came in from the other end in a gorgeous uniform, his pouting chest decorated with a row

of miniature medals, and eyed me friendlily. Crown Prince of Denmark, at the very least, I thought. If he speaks to me how on earth do I address him? Sir, Your Royal Highness —what? It was a nervous moment for a tyro in these surroundings, though I noticed a certain hesitation on his part. Suddenly Lord Churchill skated in with his mind on something, and showed his excellent teeth beneath a tonged moustache. "Having a puff?" And I said "Yes," and snatched at the chance to obtain a little advice. "Who?" he asked, and to my amazement whirled round upon my homogeneous Prince. "Who the — what the —," cried out Churchill, and ordered the crestfallen encroacher to get back to the servants' quarters. And thus was I prevented from a bad *faux pas*. When I was alone once more I emulated the Macaulay idea and wrote a cold short note to a long-suffering tailor, who must have been considerably impressed. His tone, at any rate, was nicer when he ventured to call my wandering eye next time to his outstanding bill.

About this time, having nothing to keep me occupied except the writing of books and plays, as much serious attention to golf as I could give it, the occasional attempt to win prizes at the horse shows with a beautiful little mare called

"Sal Gal" which generally came off, and tennis, I perpetrated a novel in which I took up the cudgels for the second son. I gave it the title of "Duke's Son" — "Duke's Son, Cook's Son, Son of a hundred Kings", as Kipling had sung in "The Absent-Minded Beggar" — and it was published, through the instrumentality of Curtis Brown, the literary agent, by William Heinemann, an excitable little man of most fastidious tastes whose name stood high among London publishers. It caught on very well, and seeing, as I thought, a play in the story I dramatised it, and had just got through the curious process of giving it a copyright performance, at which it was necessary for one member of the theatre-going public to pay a guinea for a seat, when Madame Pierre Berton came over from Paris to ask whether I would consent to make a contract with her for the adaptation of the novel into French. I need hardly say that I did so with great pleasure. Her husband was the author of several successful plays, among which "Zaza" had blazed a way into almost every language, and as soon as he had read her quite admirable adaptation he telegraphed to me for the French dramatic rights and wrote a long, enthusiastic letter explaining exactly how he would like to treat it as a play. As his scenario seemed to me to stick too closely to the book I sent him

my own play, of which every actor-manager in London was afraid, because my hero, otherwise charming, cheated at cards for a living. Oddly enough he liked it, and suggested a collaboration, which I jumped at. This consisted of the grafting of one or two of his ideas into the piece as I had written it and its translation, not adaptation, into French. The scene was left in its English setting because, of course, the second son question — if it is a question — is peculiar to England. One of my ideas in the novel, and not a bad one, was that hereditary titles should go down a step with every succession until they were worked out — a quick business in the case of a baronet, but a longer process in the case of a duke. This would mean that the sons, grandsons and great-grandsons, or other heirs, of men who had received titles as a reward for services, must earn them again if they could by climbing back up the ladder, thus doing away with the frequently unfortunate inheritance of a fine old title by someone unable to bear it with the dignity it required. Otherwise it died with honour. A nasty jar to certain politicians who sold titles with which to buy barbed wire to preserve themselves within. The work was finished quickly, arrangements made immediately for its production at the Réjane Theatre, with Arlette D'Orgère in the girl's part,

with Signoret, Garry, Puylagarde, Lutzi and an exceptionally fine company in her support, and I went to my beloved Paris to attend rehearsals. This was a pleasant and even exciting reversal of the usual order of things which had hitherto taken me to Paris to see French plays with Frohman for the English and American stages. From the Hôtel de Crillon, of which I am very fond, with its sweeping view across the Place de la Concorde and its nearness to the Champs Élysées, I went to the Theatre, there to be received, not as in America, where the author is regarded merely as the easily convertible weakling who has written a play which everybody is going to alter as ruthlessly as possible, but as Monsieur le Maître, first by two of the inevitable tall-hatted, black-coated persons who haunt the foyer of every Paris theatre, and afterwards by the collaborator and director and every member of the company. Vanity, vanity, all is vanity, as the old man said to someone who probably earned a sort of living by the pen, and I make no bones about saying that I found this treatment most refreshing — and perfectly correct. Rehearsals began at half-past nine in the evening, and being a punctual creature who even errs on earliness, I was welcomed by the Bertons when they came in late — Berton a short, untidy man with restive hair, who suffered from reactions

from an exuberant enthusiasm and energy, his wife a very stout lady, as round as she was high, with a too remarkable knowledge of English which led her into the frequent use of our swear-words as though they were terms of colloquial affection. She started off by calling out for instance, "Ah, by Jove, but here is my dear old bloody 'Amilton," which flung me into a panic. And after that every time I came into her line of vision she saw me red. She had lived a good deal in a part of London, it transpired, where water-cart men loaded up with water, and had heard them use this quaint expletive with the usual persistence from her window all day long. My panic increased when, with another full, round, good-natured roar, she caught Miss D'Orgère's attention on the stage, summoned her over the bridge across the pit of the orchestra, and presented me with the information that I was *un garçon* at the de Crillon Hôtel. It seemed to her that nothing more was required to be said.

At something after twelve one night soon after, the rehearsal having run along with delightful smoothness, except when one young actor had burst into a passion of tears at his inability to please himself in a scene in which everybody else considered him to be exceptionally fine, I became aware of subtle movements in the shadows at the

back seats of the stalls. To my astonishment I found that two rows at least were filled with people of both sexes who were watching the proceedings with rapt attention and interest. Asking Madame Berton who they were and why, I was told that they were dear old ruddy actors and actresses who had just come from their various theatres to watch and study the direction of her husband and the work of their confrères of the stage. A few of them were famous, and all of them — because the French stage is not, like others, free to all without teaching and diplomas, a sort of public golf course — were good. Some of them wilted in spite of this wonderful love of their art and left before one. Others joined our vivid, cackling, child-like party at a nearby café and ate enough supper to feed a starving town. Berton, a little beyond the time of life for early morning gaiety, sagged, but his buoy-like wife was in her element, leading the shouts of laughter, inventing strange and devastating dishes, and raising her cognac to untranslatable toasts. She was a remarkable woman of great intelligence, energy and wit, who appeared to be able to do without sleep and could talk on any subject at any moment of the day or night. In fact nothing stopped her. Having no children, she was at that time taking care of a good-looking little relative whom she dressed in

the costume of a Scotch pipe major, and introduced to me as Le Magrégor. It was not at once that I discovered that she meant MacGregor. The poor little man was the laughing stock of all the small boys in Paris, who, if they lived to go through the war, learned to show a healthier respect for our "Ladies of Hell." Tragically enough they hold them, with the rest of the gallant men who helped to keep France from her invader, in no gratitude now. There were no other girls quite as pretty as Arlette but several quite as charming. There were strange dark women with dead white faces and scarlet lips, equally at home probably in "Salome", "Magda" or "La Femme de Mon Ami", and men of all types and ages, the young ones smart with well-groomed heads, the others eccentrically hirsute or with Dante profiles and heavy St. Bernard jowls. It was a merry meal, often repeated during the course of rehearsals, and ending always with the flamboyant departure of the Bertons for their house near Enghien, in a dusty, rattling automobile of ancient vintage, to sleep until seven o'clock. I have a notion that the production was backed by Baron Henri de Rothschild. The translation of the novel was, at any rate, dedicated to him in flowery language and ran through numerous editions. He was present, too, if I remember rightly, at the *répéti-*

tion générale when first-night Paris poured into the ample spaces of the Théâtre Réjane — artists, actors, authors, critics — easily recognisable by their make-up — and those members of society who enjoyed the thrills of uncertainty that belong to such an occasion. Watching them arrive from an unseen corner I filled a small book with swift caricatures. I sat in the author's box with Berton, who was as nervous as a horse, and after the second act, everything having gone well till then, went round to Miss D'Orgère's dressing-room to offer congratulations — the thing to do. Her room had been turned appropriately into a bower of apple blossoms and was filled with men and bonbons, and while, with cherubic indifference to the carnal eye, she changed from head to foot for her next appearance, she received exaggerated murmurs of praise and kissed fingers with the coolness of a star. This was all the more remarkable because she had only just graduated from the Folies Bergères. Towards the end of the first scene of the third act, however, there was a sensation which, but for Berton, would have sent me out into the street and the first available cab to my hotel. It came at the moment when Lord Francis Delemere, "Franki" as they called him, had flung a victim from his house who loved his wife and had discovered their nefarious plan of earning a living,

bringing everything to an end. The young couple were together in their well-conducted London house discussing suicide as the only way out, when Joan told her adoring husband of the price of Denbigh-Schmitt's silence, which was to give him a fortnight of her life. Before Franki could find words to comment on this ghastly sacrifice, the whole house sprang to its feet, calling out "*Non, non, c'est impossible,*" which stopped the play and made a riot. With an icy spine I was just about to rise and get away with a whole skin when Berton laid a triumphant hand on my arm and said, "*Succés fou.*" The storm subsiding, Franki refused, with deep emotion, to save the position by any such horrible expedient and the curtain fell to roar upon roar of applause. It was an astonishing moment, especially in Paris, where its playgoers are accustomed to much stronger meat than that. And so "Bridge", as Berton called the play, went over with that sophisticated audience and champagne flowed freely later at the Café de la Paix. In fact, in the swelling hours of the morning the more thirsty of us drank it in the urns the bottles had been standing in. Polaire, the lady with the smallest waist, and Gaby Deslys, the lady with the most charming knees, were both present. I had breakfast that morning with Miss Elizabeth Marbury, a

very dear friend of mine, to whose sound sense and great ability I owed, as many other dramatists did, much gratitude. She had no objection to my sitting down in evening clothes. When I dined at her little gem of a house in New York the other night it was utterly impossible to believe that so much water had flowed under the bridges, and so much champagne had been emptied into the Hudson, since that rather unsteady breakfast at the old de Crillon years before.

II.

A dozen things, in addition to the time devoted to the production of "Bridge", had delayed me from sitting down to work on a new novel, the delivery of which had come uncomfortably close. Just at the moment when I had made up my mind as to what I felt in the mood to write, after that period of broodiness, so disastrous to everyone nearby, through which, like hens who sit on eggs, every writing man goes, I went blind. Or rather, having something inconveniently the matter with my eyes, I was rendered blind through the necessity of wearing a bandage. A nice kettle of fish! With barely six weeks in which to fulfil my contract and dig my way through eighty thousand words, I had n't a dog's chance to be able to use a pen. I was intensely worried and anxious.

To be late with the book meant missing the season, annoying my publisher, and making a vacuum in my fluctuating bank account. It happened, luckily, that my brother Arthur was having a vacation from his cramming shop and he suggested that I should dictate the book to him. Dictate? I had never done, or conceived the possibility of doing, such a thing. Description possibly, but not dialogue, without the chance to polish a point. It seemed absurd. But time was flying as its wont is and something had to be done, however desperate, and so, one day after tea I got as near to this new and apparently hopeless experiment as sitting down with my feet on my desk — stuck, mumchance and fearful, utterly blacked out. And for an hour I sat there wordless, wondering what to say, until, at last, angry, I made a dash at it, and, by Jove, it went. At first very slowly, as though I had never rolled words along before; then with a little more confidence, and presently so fast that my brother, writing in longhand, yelled for mercy and I had to put on the brake. The end of it was that I never enjoyed anything so much in my life. The luxury of lying in a comfortable chair while another man underwent the physical annoyance of writing, wrestling with a self-filling pen, trying to find a comfortable place for feet, was inde-

scribable. The pleasure, too, of looking ahead, although sightless, of seeing where one was going without the impedimenta of blotting paper and ink pot, the falling of loose tobacco, and all the rest of it, was all too good for words. It is true that the book was easy and light, about boys and girls and love, and the attitude of elderly people towards their young ones who were confident of uncertain wings, with a case of mistaken identity to play with, and a place that I knew and loved. Be that as it may the chapters were going from the typist to the publisher. I could rewrite nothing, add nothing or cut. It gave me a sense of adventure, a feeling of daring and responsibility, and a new relish for the job. The book that came out of the dark was called "Plain Brown — A Summer Story", in which a young Oxford man, who was, of course, by no means plain, but who had no hyphen and no final e to his name, went for a groom in the Thames-side house of the next Lord Mayor of London because, having to earn a living and that of his dog, he was too well educated to do so in any other way. It happened that at the moment of his entrance into this family the son of Lord Southwater disappeared from his haunts to the complete mystification of Scotland Yard and the amateur detectives of the press. Because Brown wore a stringless eyeglass from time to time

and was modelled on the typical lines of all good cricketers, the family leaped to the conclusion that they were romantically harbouring the missing man, and treated him as such. Giving him a cigarette case on which there were the initials of this person — a pure accident — I was inundated with letters from people who wanted to know how, having no acquaintance with the missing man, he came by such a thing, and it was necessary to keep handy a large supply of typewritten answers to satisfy the curiosity of the readers of the book.

In course of time, having done nothing with the idea for the play which I had refused to twist out of recognition for the actor-manager, as I have already described, I used it in a novel, which I called "The Blindness of Virtue." It was very well received, and when my young brother came down from Oxford for the summer vacation, and on the third hole of a golf course on which we fought bogey with daily persistence and fluctuating success, asked me why I didn't make a play of it, I replied that it was no earthly use to do so because the boy's part would be far too good to permit its being produced under the existing system of actor-managership. I said that nothing would ever induce me to dramatise it. It would be a hopeless waste of time. But on the sixth

green a sudden itch to do so became so painful that I foozled an easy putt, and on the seventh tee sliced my drive into a bubbling stream. That settled the question. I said, "Come on. Let 's go and do the damn thing," turned up a game that had gone to pieces, stalked back to the club-house where we mounted bicycles, rode home and started in. With the book to help me I dictated the first act before dinner, the second act before falling, dog-tired, into bed, the third act before lunch the following morning and the last act in the small hours of that night. Spending the whole of the next day in going all over it, I sent it up to London to a typist and returned to the golf course considerably lighter in weight and with nothing on my mind to undermine the urgent concentration without which one might far better occupy oneself with marbles than with golf. That was Tuesday. On the Thursday I went to town, called for the typed play and was on my way home to look it over and see what it was like when Charles Kenyon, a young actor who had taken a lease of the Little Theatre in the Adelphi saw me, crossed the street and said, "Why don't you make a play of 'The Blindness of Virtue'?" To which I said, "I have," handed him one of the copies and arranged to stay in town until he rang me up and gave me his decision. This he did and with

healthy enthusiasm told me that he would like to put the piece into rehearsal the following Monday, if he could play the boy. Quick work and very interesting. Not without a touch of excitement, too. It might turn out that my decision, in spite of a feeling of disheartenment, had been a good one, and worth turning up a round of golf for, after all. But it seemed to me that Kenyon was better suited, with his direct and rather incisive manner and nice earnestness, to play the Vicar than the boy. We dined together that night to discuss the whole matter, which was of vital importance to us both, and eventually Kenyon was persuaded to tackle the part of the older man, and we cast the other characters on the back of a menu, with the exception of the boy. Where on earth was he? Among the names that we wrote down were those of Margery Maude, Polly Emery, Louie Emery, Beryl Faber for the Vicar's wife, and Kenyon's dog for the Vicar's boon companion. The puzzle was where to find that boy. The next day every theatrical agent was applied to and all available young actors, scrutinised. No luck. On the Saturday night, extremely worried, I went out to an outlying theatre to see an actor who was playing a small part, found Owen Nares, by all that was fortunate, and bought him off. Heading this ideal company

who were as keen as mustard on the play, with Harker designing the scenery, Kenyon set the pace, and it was a fast one. We were determined to open the theatre in the quickest possible time. It so happened, however, that the London papers were in the middle of a feud against the censorship. The Lord Chamberlain's department, which issued the license to perform a play, had been bitterly attacked. A very fine piece of work by Granville Barker had been refused its license and others had recently come under the ban. Bernard Shaw had let himself go and a petition of dramatists had gone forward, which incidentally I had refused to sign, begging for the abolition of the Censor's office, and there had been, in fact, a great stirring up, an unholy row. The press was, for the most part, all on the side of the dramatists, and when, on the Friday before our Monday night premier it got about that "The Blindness of Virtue" had not been granted a license and was about to join the list of banned plays, the whole thing opened again, and the fire blazed once more. The play had been submitted to the Censor on the day that we began rehearsing and it was perfectly true that no license had arrived. There was much heart-burning and anxiety. Kenyon had been put to great expense, he had the theatre on his hands, the company had worked like Trojans,

and I hated the idea of being labelled as a man who had written an unproducible play. No one had said or written a word against the novel. Far to the contrary, indeed. Saturday went by, with the papers crackling, and Sunday came, without a license. On the Sunday afternoon, however, Kenyon and I received a summons to appear at the Lord Chamberlain's office and click heels to Sir Douglas Dawson in St. James's Palace. This we did, wondering what the dickens was to be our fate, and found the tall ex-soldier Lord Chamberlain, cool and imperturbable, in a charming little room. From him we gathered, during a most affable conversation, that the rather Gilbertian process of passing upon the play had not ended in the necessary license because, after it had been reported upon by the experienced person, once a critic, whose duty it was to act as a sort of Custom's officer with his little piece of white chalk, it had to be looked at by other higher officers as a matter of form. I don't think they ever read it, except when certain lines or scenes were questioned, and then I suppose there was much head-wagging and a final vote. I am certain that there was no fiendish desire to make trouble and even great reluctance to stop the production of a play. There were obviously certain things that had been written down as objectionable in the book

of rules and over a rigid line no one was permitted to step. The whole business was extremely childish and irritating but I had nothing to do with the petition because I preferred the Lord Chamberlain's department to that of one in Scotland Yard which would lay the theatre open to the arbitrary complaint of the faddist and the sort of pure person to whom everything was indecent. I forget the names of these gentlemen, but I believe that one was Sir Edward Carson and another Lord Buckmaster. At any rate they were scattered at that moment in various parts of the United Kingdom, one in Ireland and the other in Scotland, and the consequence was that the script was still wandering about. Would I, as the author, give my word of honour that there was nothing in the play to which the least objection could be taken, no attack upon the Sovereignty of the King, the status of the Church, the sanctity of marriage, and so forth and so on? I would and did. Moreover I laid the play before Sir Douglas Dawson, gave him a brief résumé of its idea, and warmly supported Kenyon's offer to place a box at the disposal for the first performance of all the censorship. "Very good," replied Sir Douglas Dawson. "Here's the license then," and he signed it with a flourish, and all was well. But, in the meantime, Beerbohm Tree, at the

mercy of a phrase, had rushed into print in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and written something to the effect that censorship would always be necessary so long as dramatists insisted upon "standing on the edge of a sewer." This was pointed at me, although Tree had not read the novel or the play, or attended any of the rehearsals. And so, in a perfectly friendly manner, I spoke to him on the telephone and told him that if he did not apologise for that unwarranted and inexcusable remark, which had doubtless given him great delight to roll over the tongue, I should be obliged most regretfully to refer him to my lawyers. His withdrawal, immediate and agitated, which I wrote for him, appeared in the *Pall Mall* on the Monday, thus making pistols for two and coffee for one, or its modern and more expensive equivalent, a quite unnecessary proceeding. But the paragraphs in the papers, the revival of the storm, and the nasty insinuations in the gossip had had their natural effect. The theatre was bombarded for seats by all those people who hoped to enjoy a salacious evening against which they might howl a protest the following day. Very few of them found room because the theatre was little, and all the seats had gone.

It was really rather a wonderful night, and what euphoniously is called "all London" was

present. Cyril Maude had been delighted with his daughter, as he had every reason to be. Her performance was exquisite. Kenyon, although still hankering after the boy's part, made a fine, direct, manly Vicar in the early forties, Beryl Faber did her usual delicate and beautiful work as his wife. Polly Emery gave sympathetic laughter to everything she touched, and the dog was so natural that he brought down the curtain of the first act to a gasp of apprehension as to what appeared to be going to happen to the men in the orchestra, and then to a roar of delight because it did. Owen Nares, unknown to London, was watched with immense interest and instant liking, and when at the end of the third act he rose to a great height of genuine and poignant emotion he brought down the house. It was the finest piece of acting by a young man of a most winning and delightful appearance and personality that had been seen for years. It stirred the women in the audience into something like hysteria, the curtain rose and fell as though a Caruso had been discovered, and there was much waving of scarves and handkerchiefs. All this was repeated when the play was over, there was a persistent call for author, and, with icy extremities and something in my throat, I went on with the company, and having to say the usual few stam-

mering words, told the true story of the delayed license, pointed to the box which contained the censors and gave the quietus to the nasty gossip.

III.

I have made, I find, several references of a skimpy nature to my brother Arthur in this book, and always in the brief relation of the help that he gave me until the outbreak of war by submitting to dictation and in a hundred other ways. The youngest member of my father's numerous brood, which, at one time, consisted of eight children, six boys and two girls, he went from an English school to one at St. Malo, which was under the direction of a body of learned and delightful priests. From this, speaking French like a native, and swimming like a fish, he went to Oldershaw's famous cramming shop to be prepared for Oxford, where he had the privilege of meeting Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton, whose wife's sister was Mrs. Oldershaw. His description of the way in which G. K. played billiards would bring a smile to the lips of a zoölogical bear. The idea was that he should enter Christ Church, but as this was not possible at the time, he went to St. John's, and never regretted it. He rowed in the College eight and represented the University at Cambridge in the boxing team, getting his half

blue. On coming down, bitten with the itch for writing that had already attacked me and my brothers Philip and Frank, who wrote a book about West Africa, called "The Palm-oil Ruffian", which was greatly praised, he joined me as my secretary, and in the few spare hours that I let him have, wrote "The Compleat Oxford Man", "Rowlandson's Oxford", which Kegan, Paul and Company published with the whole set of Rowlandson's inimitable cartoons, and "Cheadle and Son", a novel. He lived wherever I lived, worked whenever I worked, played golf, tennis, billiards, or whatever game I played, and we were inseparable.

Once when I was ill I asked him to write a weekly article that I was contributing to the *World*, due the next day, and he did so without turning a hair and in a manner which made me strain every effort to beat. And once when I undertook to provide a new book to a comic opera by Lehar, called "The Merry Peasant", which was running badly at the Strand Theatre, he helped me to produce it with the company which was playing the condemned version every night and rehearsing the new version every day — a colossal feat. Arthur Williams, Florence St. John and Courtice Pounds were among that plucky company, I remember, and I have an abid-

ing picture of my brother, who knew nothing of the stage, coaching two of the younger members through a love scene. And when the second first night arrived and the new version was played to a crowded house, and there was much emotion on the stage when the curtain fell, after numerous enthusiastic calls, because Christmas was at hand and nobody wanted to be out of a job, he was as much covered with dust and as completely worn out as I was after working on the stage. We went to Paris together and lived in the Latin Quarter so that I might absorb the local colour for "The Infinite Capacity", and later to America when I asked him to jump into the boy's part in "The Blindness of Virtue", which Basil Hallam had been playing, and he did, and was amazingly good. When the war came, he joined the 21st Lancers as a trooper, in order to enjoy the satisfaction of discovering if Kipling's "Soldiers Three" still held true, and was quickly in Flanders in the firing-line. When he was recommended for a commission he asked to be transferred to any branch of the service in which horses were still in use, went into the Royal Field Artillery, after having made a funeral pile of his begrimed and mud-stained uniform in my back yard, was trained in gunnery and went through the perfectly abortive campaign in Serbia before returning to France. He

was a Major in 1918, commanding a battery in the great retreat, and after firing day after day with open sights on the swarming Germans, feeding on apples as he drew back his guns successfully, met Philip in Poix and, having said that he had put in a jolly good time, caved in. A dose of gas took him to hospital and was the cause of his being appointed liaison-officer on the French G. Q. H. with whom he went into Germany at the end of the war. He was just as fine a soldier as he had been a secretary, a golfer, a boxing man and a pal, which is saying a good deal, and when he wrote his book about the war, called "Gun Fodder", his luck in escaping death did not follow him into peace, because the book was published at a time when people were fed up with reading about the war. It was one of the six best books on that inexhaustible subject all the same, according to Arthur Symonds, and me. He is writing again now and living in New York, married to a charming Boston girl, and going strong. He always did go strong, as I know well.

In no part that Beryl Faber ever played was she so brave and beautiful as in her last one. This was in the May of 1912 when, with a specially chosen company of London players, she was to sail for America in the autumn to see what would happen to "The Blindness of Virtue"

Major Arthur Hamilton Gibbs, M. C. R. F. A.
As a trooper in the 21st Lancers, 1914.

there. The *Titanic* had gone down, turning over the heart of the civilized world. At a benefit performance that had been arranged for certain of the survivors she was to act in a one-act play of mine, called "Soldier's Daughters", with Winifred Emery and Polly Emery. She had been nursing her mother through pneumonia and came to London feeling perfectly well. But as the rehearsals proceeded a sudden frightening cough made it impossible for her to speak. She was taken to my rooms in the Albany and put to bed. A doctor was called in. Then her father, who was a doctor, came; and shortly after that several large and ominous looking tubes of oxygen were brought in. Double pneumonia burned up her lungs, and during the afternoon of the fourth day of her illness she turned to her father and said quietly, "So this is death. . . ."

In 1911 all Europe was in a strange and uneasy frame of mind. The shadow of the sword of Damocles lay on Paris, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Rome, Vienna, the smaller capitals and London. Governments, for reasons that were hidden from the public, woke, startled, from their sleep. The word "Agadir" was floating about like an ugly cloud. In 1910, as long before as that, a great German general had said to a Dutch officer attached for the manoeuvres, "If Russia ever mo-

bilises we must fight at once." Maxse had kept alive the stamped-out work of Lord Roberts and week by week had been forcing the attention of his readers to an inevitable war. Foreign offices and embassies shuddered from time to time, but hoped against hope. Armies and navies everywhere went through feverish moments of polishing, then simmered into ordinary routine. Officers, with their ears to the ground, said "This is the year" to their Governments, and went on playing bridge because the men who were in power, without being powerful, giggled, talked anaemic intellectualism, made secret treaties, pursued the usual policy of the ostrich, and left it to their Foreign Ministers to play chess. The German Ambassador in London was either blind or deaf, or being stuffed like a Michaelmas goose with Liberalism. At any rate, as subsequent events have proved with tragic conclusiveness, he was taught to believe with or without Lord Grey's approval that in the event of a German attack on France, whether through Belgium or not, Mr. Asquith and company would only honour the Entente Cordiale to the extent of supplying our friends with ammunition. It is true that Mr. Lloyd George had spoken grave words at the Bankers' Association but, as Churchill writes, his audience looked upon them as "one of

the ordinary platitudes of ministerial pronouncements upon foreign affairs," and the Radical element behind the government scoffed and were annoyed. There was no frankness between Governments. A certain amount of puerile cunning, which goes by the name of diplomacy, and that was all. In the streets, in the clubs, in drawing-rooms and on golf courses men were saying "When Germany starts fighting . . ." and letting it go at that, with a shrug of the shoulders. What else were men to do? There was no strength, or wisdom, or courage, and little honesty in any of the leaders, only funk, and weak hoping, and eye-wash. God's in His Heaven and all's well with the world.

But one night early in 1912 a great ball was given at Covent Garden Opera House in which three thousand of London's amusement-seeking people indulged in an orgy of Orientalism, then the fashion, set by Reinhardt's "Sumurun" and Knoblock's "Kismet." I led the procession, with a party of thirty people, as Abdul, and ignoring the shadow of the sword, everyone, in the most fantastically exquisite costumes, danced and played the fool. Members of the Lords and Commons, Army and Navy, Diplomacy and the stage, mixed in a phantasmagoria of colour, and as I was shooting a comically fat person below

my box with a soda water syphon to the painful mirth of the man at my side, one of the men in power, he gripped me by the arm suddenly and said, "This means war." He must have been shocked, I suppose, at this gay riot at such a moment when he, better than most men, knew to what sort of Armageddon all Europe was drifting. We may have seemed to deserve a kick in the face. But nothing was done to meet the trouble half way except by Prince Louis of Battenberg, Winston Churchill and the officers at the Admiralty, who worked late and early to put the Fleet into the highest state of fighting efficiency, to the deep annoyance of the House, and London, like Paris, Berlin, Vienna, St. Petersburg, put in a good time, with the sub-conscious feeling that they were dancing on the crater of a volcano. A short life and a merry one. And certain people, related to the English Government, set a rather nasty pace. They ran downhill into scandal, strange nights in steamboats, with drownings and the like. The Westminster stage was producing a very lax rêvue, almost a burlesque, playing bridge behind the scenes. Krupps was at full blast, and they knew it. What did it matter? The Kaiser and his Junkers took great pleasure in playing with cannon. It was extravagant fun, but it must be harmless. War, in such a state of high civilisa-

THE RT. HON. WINSTON SPENCER CHURCHILL.
The little bull.

tion, was a perfectly unthinkable thing. Don't be fussy, children. You may sleep peacefully in your, or anybody else's, beds. I met Lord Roberts from time to time, "the old man in his dotage", the jingo, the firebrand, "that most uncomfortable prophet", as a phrase-maker in the Cabinet called him, and listened, chilled, to what he had to say. And I well remember the wordy spanking I received from this same phrase-maker with an excellent taste in ties, when I wrote a paragraph in the *Tuesday Review*, an undergraduate weekly that I financed for my brother at Oxford, in which I heaved a sigh of relief at a faint mention of the development of an air service which "I hoped would be ready in time to meet the German Zeppelins when they flew towards London to drop bombs." I was told to dip my pen in less dramatic ink. However, a very good time was had by all.

And a very good time was had by my brother and his co-editors of that weekly, Romanes and Winnington-Ingram, and me. It was, ironically enough, the organ of the Officers' Training Corps, and as it was printed at the *Pall Mall Gazette* office in London its appearance was extremely nice. Rather, in fact, like that of the *Saturday Review* upon which it ventured to model itself somewhat, and a very good model too. It was

open to receive verses and parodies but it closed its doors to triolets. It had two or three pages of editorial notes, many of which were written by Dons and Professors, a weekly star article from the pens of famous men, a series called "The Compleat Oxford Man", light and satirical, written by my brother and afterwards brought out as a book, to be followed by "Rowlandson's Oxford", now rare; several pages of O. T. C. news; "The Younger Generation", supplied by future Oxford men then at Eton, Harrow, Winchester, Rugby, Charterhouse, Cheltenham and the rest; theatre criticisms, book reviews, and a page at the end called "The Sweet Shady Side of Pall Mall", which I contributed, calling attention to the doings of a city less important in the scheme of things than Oxford, but an amusing place to which to dash up and paint red. In *The Isis* it had a permanent rival, and there were, of course, other flowers of undergraduate literary effort that blossomed but to die. It was urgent that a definite splash should be made with the first and second issues, in order to wake the echoes of indifference at any price, and so a cold-blooded and most sarcastic attack was made upon the Union (the Oxford Debating Society and Club) which, as was hoped, drew both blood and immediate attention. In revenge the President of the Union moved, in the preliminaries,

to take in six copies of the paper, which spelt the horrible diminution of circulation, and great excitement prevailed. Nothing like this had happened in Oxford since sixteen hundred or so, and a whip went out for a full attendance of the O. T. C. and other supporters, with the result that the debate, and a heated one, on this motion, occupied the whole attention of the evening and was lost. An account of this extraordinary happening was telegraphed to the London papers with the excellent result of fame. And during the subsequent career of the *Tuesday Review*, which eventually went into the limbo of forgotten things when my brother joined the army of workers in the University of life, Don met Don in its columns, anonymously, and then came the tag of Greek.

It was great fun while it lasted. Also it paid its own way, which was not the story of the more high-brow, pompous and gorgeous-looking half-a-crown monthly called *The Oxford Point of View*, started some years before by Compton Mackenzie, while he was at Magdalen, and in the first number of which I wrote an extremely grave and annoying paper entitled "Oxford and Cambridge as recruiting centres for the Stage", which may possibly have had something to do with the fact that it went to an untimely grave at the age of three numbers. It was in that exquisitely named paper,

however, that Compton Mackenzie came under the intoxicating influence of ink which has never left him, much to the edification of a larger and larger body of readers to whom he has since given "Sinister Street", "Carnival" and the Sylvia trilogy, among other ebullient efforts of brilliant character drawing and a mordaunt wit. I remember the young red-headed, pale-faced Georgian Compton Mackenzie best, when, in the production of "Twelfth Night" by the Oxford University Dramatic Society, he gave a ripe and Elizabethan rendering of Sir Andrew Aguecheek, first in the Worcester gardens as a pastoral and many times afterwards in aid of various charities in the gardens of country houses. I was with the O. U. D. S. once, when it was staying in the house at Clewer, near Windsor, of Lady Dalton FitzGerald to raise money for Princess Louise's crêche. The First Life Guards, which had given a musical ride in the grounds in the afternoon, had left all the instruments of their band in the billiard room. Finding these there after supper we insinuated ourselves into the brass twists, possessed ourselves of other musical weapons which none of us knew how to work, and with Charlie Maude at the piano, Compton Mackenzie between the drums, Jack Gilliat with the cymbals and all the other men blowing loud and variously gave one of the most eerie renderings of "Tann-

häuser" that had ever been heard on earth. Poor Lady Dalton FitzGerald and her beautiful niece, Mrs. Fox-Pitt, and other members of the house party endured great agonies for an hour. But when, suddenly conscience-stricken, we opened the door to creep out, we found several servants sleeping peacefully in the hall, waiting to turn out the lights. Some people have no music in their souls!

CHAPTER SIX

Public Speaking. G. K. Chesterton. The Women Writers' Club. Hugh Walpole. Sir Philip Gibbs. Lord Northcliffe. One's Daily Letters. Buffalo. Chicago. Speaking in War Days. My First Atlantic Crossing. Robert Lorraine.

I.

I HAVE not the remotest idea whether the art of speaking in public comes easy to authors. It doesn't to me, and I know nothing that fills me with such abject terror as the knowledge that at some moment during a dinner, after a roundabout introduction by a hardened toastmaster, my name is going to be led up to as that of the next person to inflict himself upon a smoking company that would give almost everything it possesses to keep me in my seat. Or when, having let myself in to deliver an address to a woman's club on a subject of which I know very much less than any person in the room, I wait on the platform with a red-hot needle going through and through my solar plexus for the chairwoman to come to the end of a kind but disastrous eulogy. But for the good-natured curiosity of American audiences to see British authors in the

flesh I doubt whether a single one of us would have ventured ever to get on his hind legs and stumble through a speech. No Society in England, until recently, had ever conceived the possibility of encouraging us out of our lairs. Before the war, it would have been, in fact, a preposterous and pathetic idea to have suggested that anyone should meet to listen to an author, even if it had been guaranteed that he would have spoken on anti-vivisection, or one of the other questions of that sort which would then have dragged half a dozen intellectuals away from home for an hour. The lecture habit had not caught hold of England in those days. Sooner or later it will, I suppose, with the gradual spread of women's clubs, but I am quite certain that authors will be the last people upon whom Entertainment secretaries will ever fall back, and then only in desperation. The English author is not, in short, a prophet in his own country, and when he feels an irresistible desire to become one elsewhere it is to America that he goes, lured by the seductive tales of booty composed in the imaginative offices of lecture agents who, as soon as they have got him in their power, put him on a train that never seems to stop and lose him.

It was, therefore, a really astonishing thing when, one night in those falsely placid pre-war

times, during a dinner at the Women Writers' Club of London, Gilbert Chesterton and I were asked to carry on, in public at a special meeting, an argument that we were enjoying across the table. I think it was the courageous and prolific Mrs. Baillie-Reynolds who conceived this unprecedented scheme, and it was only because we were overwhelmed with surprise at a request so flattering and so un-English that Chesterton and I fell in with it. He has never told me whether he regretted his decision as soon and as deeply as I did, — one that left me sleepless and without an appetite for days,— but I could see that on the appointed evening when we met for our forensic duel he was a very mass of nerves. With a diabolical cunning and the most subtle sense of mischief he had searched his brain for a subject of which he was quite certain that I was totally ignorant, and as, of course, it fell to him to open the proceedings and prove his point before I could get a chance to start a tangent, he revelled in the complete satisfaction of having an antagonist who was as dead as mutton before the fight began. I could see all this in his occasional nervous smile during a meal at which I pecked at a roll and glanced askance at a wine-glass. The big room was not, as we had supposed and hoped that it would be, empty but for a smattering of Mrs. Baillie-Reynolds' imme-

diate circle. It was packed like a sardine-tin. I could never have believed that there were so many women writers on this earth. Here and there was a man, either one who was known as the husband of a famous authoress or one who was not. Mrs. Chesterton, more than wife and something of mother, with a wonderful touch of governess, valet, Cook's guide and angel, whispered encouragement to G. K. before he mounted the little platform and brushed the crumbs from his garments. When he announced that he had chosen as his argument "That there is no Law in England", I felt like a paper bag that had been puffed out and clapped between two vigorous hands. Much more so during the hour that followed, while Chesterton, utterly lost to his audience, played with words as a great juggler plays with billiard balls, piling them, first one and then another, on the tip of a cue, the butt end of which is balanced on his nose. Or better, as a conscientious Florentine, seated in a cool hole in an eleventh century wall, makes a large circular piece of exquisite lace of the most intricate and delicate design. It was hot in that room, and if all the rest of us were warm how much warmer must Chesterton have been! During the whole concentrated and inspired course of his brilliant reasoning he caught the little rivulets that ran down his face, as they have a knack

of doing from the snowy forehead of Pilatus, and just as they were about to fall from the first of his chins flicked them generously among the disconcerted and wedged-in people who were literally sitting at his feet. From time to time, too, oblivious of the world, he groped deep into his trousers pockets and rattled his change, going on and on, from point to point, from proof to proof, until the constitution of England was quite devoid of law and a circle of white shirt bulged beneath his waistcoat. It was monstrous, gigantic, amazing, delicious, deadly. No such thing had ever been done before and probably never will be achieved again. The athletic people all round the platform, who hardly dared to imagine what might happen next, and those in comparative safety in more distant parts of the room who hung upon every word, as I did, burst into loud applause when, finally, the lacemaker tied his final knot. All that I could do, when I mounted the glistening platform, was deliberately and helplessly to misrepresent the whole thesis of the argument and make out that Chesterton had been trying to prove that there are no laws in England — and then dance upon his body. And as soon as my unbeatable antagonist saw how I was wriggling from beneath the gorgeous pile of his words he rolled about in his arm-chair and uttered scream after scream of joyful pain, paradox-

ist to the bitter end. And it was his sporting mirth, his unconscious imitation of a pea hen crying for her recalcitrant young, that made my feeble effort go with gusts of laughter.

I have another unforgettable picture of Chesterton in my brain. I went into the fly-blown dining-room at Paddington Station to have a cup of tea one afternoon, having missed a train, and saw him sitting at one of the tables in a black sombrero and an enormous cloak, with a small but bulging bag on the table at his elbow, reading a very thin book with evident enjoyment, a cup of tea in one hand and a glass of port wine in the other. Even in those utterly English surroundings he looked like a Dutch burgomaster just released from Rembrandt's studio after a long sitting.

The next time we met on the same platform was in New York, some time after the armistice, when he was trying, with considerable success, to be a prophet out of his own country. I had been done the honour to be asked to act as his chairman, and eager to have the pleasure of meeting him again went fairly early to one of the dressing rooms in the theatre in which he was going to address a crowded house of American admirers. I found him, with the devoted Mrs. Chesterton, walking up and down with a worried look and a tumbler. After our greeting I asked him what he was drink-

ing and he said "sal volatile." "Sal volatile? I thought that was the thing they gave to ladies with the megrims." "I have the megrims," he replied. "I have the megrims," — which was not, as I knew, a thing to be wondered at because he had just returned to New York for a few hours after having been hurried half way round America before being flung into a train to cover the other half, in the usual lecture-tour way. When, by this time very fearful of his chairmen, he asked me what I was about to say, I told him that I hadn't the remotest idea; that I never prepared my impromptus and being frightfully afraid that I might forget a sentence in the middle of a paragraph and fall dead on my face in the footlights I therefore waited until I faced the audience in order to draw whatever inspiration there might be telegraphed to me from a kind brown eye. We walked on arm in arm, and after his heart-warming reception had died away at last — there is no enthusiasm in the world like that of America — I got my inspiration, assured the audience that I knew the whole duty of a chairman better than most men and told them why. I had once endured the exquisite torture, I said, of drawing for a chairman a new local magnate who had never acted in that capacity before. He spoke not for the desirable five minutes, but during the whole of the period

that had been allotted to me. Carried away on the swift tide of his verbosity he confided to a long-suffering but gradually amused audience every complex that had grown upon his brain. He went from books to politics, from religion to baseball, from prohibition to flappers, from the European situation to breakfast food. On and on and on, went that stream of words like the waters of the Arno, while I, watching the bland faced clock in the hall, metaphorically shed garment after garment in great nervousness and rose to say good-night in a state of nature when, at last, the suddenly conscience-stricken babbler sat down in the middle of a sentence and forgot to introduce me after all. It was good once more to hear that laugh of painful joy, but not so good to notice that Chesterton had acquired self-consciousness, that he desisted from flickering his rivulets among his audience and that his pockets had been very carefully sewn up. But once again he made an exquisite design in a lace-work of words, brought lovely paradoxes out of his sleeve with the skill of a conjuror who produces rabbits from a hat, and gave a most keen and appreciative audience an hour and a half of sheer delight. A rare man, Chesterton! A reincarnation of one of the mighty penmen who tapped the posts of Fleet Street in Johnsonian days, but with a high and pure spirit, a great en-

thusiasm for humanity, a fine and delicate wit, an exquisite sense of satire, a boyish love of games, and a very kind heart. What an epoch-making Pope he would have been!

The experiment, which gave the members of the Women Writers' Club a memorable evening, was repeated later by Hugh Walpole and myself. The subject chosen this time was "In Defence of Publishers", a popular one in such a place in which most of the writers believed, rightly or wrongly, that one or other of the London publishing firms had done badly by their books, and it fell to Walpole to open the proceedings. Looking less like one of the Canons of St. Paul's Cathedral in mufti than he does today and with not quite the same assurance that he has naturally acquired since then, Walpole spoke well and charmingly in defence of a body the members of which hold themselves as totally exempt from ordinary men with something to sell. He did permit himself to indulge in a touch or two of the bland humour that has made him now one of the most popular of the English crusaders in the United States, where he has adopted the habit of discovering a native genius or so during each of his visits, but for the most part his talk was in robust and whole-hearted support of publishers, whose difficulties he brought forward with winning sympathy, and who, in spite

of certain proofs to the contrary, were very good friends of the author. My attack was rendered less easy than I thought that it would be because many of the men were present against whom my tirades were flung, so that it became necessary to invent a composite name for the principal firms in order to avoid personalities. I was not too, as it happened, seething with any deep sense of injury, being perfectly well aware of the fact that, in the final analysis, the publisher has very little to do with the success of a book. The one which, like "Main Street" or "If Winter Comes", has something in it that demands attention, sells itself. Nothing can stop it, except the breakdown of the presses or a printers' strike. Others equally good, and perhaps even very much better, potter into a mere average sale because there is not in them the same immediately popular clutch. All the advertising in the world, it is said, is money lost. As in racing, where an outsider about which nothing is known shoots out of the ruck and leaves all the classic horses a mile behind, so it is in publishing, when the most unlikely book in a tragically long list of well-typed "works" runs suddenly through edition after edition to the speechless surprise of its sponsors and the gentlemen who spot the winners and roll the log. It was all, I am afraid, a little clumsy, and I was not helped, on

this occasion, by the Chestertonian laugh. The evening was not, therefore, a very successful one, and I had the uncomfortable feeling that my squibs were damp. Nevertheless, the idea of arguing in public remained a good one and I think that it was continued by the Club.

I was chairman for my brother, Philip Gibbs, when, during his second lecture tour in America, he had the courage to fall in with my urgent plea and speak on the Irish question at Carnegie Hall. It was a very noisy and dramatic night, made all the more so because it took place at a time when the Black and Tans had been carrying out reprisals and the large numbers of Irish in New York were in a dangerous state of hysterical rage. The sound of an English voice was more than enough to set them on fire at any moment. The immense hall was crowded from floor to ceiling and although it was generally realized that there was little hope of escaping a riot there was no police protection of any other sort than is usually provided for a peaceful symphony concert. Looking, as he always does on a platform, like a frightfully tired Savonarola who is speaking in a trance, my brother did no more than walk down the vast emptiness of that platform, wait until the great burst of clapping from the floor of the house and the boxes had ceased and commence with "Ladies

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SIR PHILIP GIBBS, K. B. E.

and Gentlemen" before the storm broke. From all parts of the gallery and upper circle there were yells, catcalls, imprecations, threats. Inspired patriots, many of whom had never been near Ireland, almost immediately began to fight with each other for the right to carry on a solo. It was bedlam let loose. Little white-faced women in green hats screamed each other down, while old men and young shouted raucously first at the would-be speaker and then at their friends. It was the more peculiarly and characteristically Irish because if these quaint excitable people had given my patient brother half a chance they quickly would have discovered that on many points he was their friend. They were there, however, to enjoy the evening to the fullest extent of their lungs, and not even the sudden appearance of Father Duffy, who climbed up on the platform, and endeavoured to make an appeal for fairness, did anything to prevent them from obtaining their money's worth. The forthright priest, a great popular favourite in the City, seemed to be rather astonished at his utter inability to soothe his people. And while my brother waited in a sort of ethereal calm to do his job, the anti-Irish Americans close to the platform cried out encouraging words, and I ran down a long corridor to the front of the hall. The two indifferent policemen who stood chatting

in the street knew nothing of the high emotion that was being displayed within. I told them about it and as they were Irish themselves they were glad to hear the news. I then consulted the manager of the building, rang up the nearest police-station, and suggested that it might be wise to send round several hefty men to deal with the riot. Mr. George Barr Baker with several volunteers ran up to the gallery to try their hands at peace-making and all the while there stood my brother, looking smaller and whiter and more patient than ever, while the fratricidal war went on. In a very short time a rescue party of bluecoats and silver buttons put in an appearance and the foyer was quickly filled with dishevelled enthusiasts who had been rounded up and swept downstairs. It was an amusing thing to see them demand their money back from the box office as though their evening had been ruined by the other party, and then go forth like rumbling volcanoes. Not quite so amusing when one of them re-entered the building surreptitiously to shout again, and I met him, an enormous shockheaded Peter, as he dodged up a flight of stone stairs. The bullock-like blow that he shot out at me failed of its mark, or I should not now be able to tell the story. Mine, straight from the left shoulder, landed, more by luck than judgment, on the edge of his jaw, and he fell backwards

into the arms of two approaching policemen, who caught him like a sack of potatoes and pitched him into the middle of the street. Finally, to the cheers of the lower part of the hall and the frequent unquenchable execrations of the upper part my brother said his say, holding a brief neither for one side of that eternal question nor the other, but taking the middle of the road, as he afterwards did in his book to which he gave that title. It was a masterly performance, scrupulously fair and sound, and if he was not able to convince the unconvincible what he did succeed in doing was definitely to prove to the Irish-Americans present that their brother citizens of New York were in no mood to suffer under the tyranny of their unsporting methods and demanded ordinary decency and fairness towards any sincere man who was intensely anxious to throw what light he could upon a very vexed question which was of vital interest to them all. When it was all over, and I joined my brother in the small artists' room that echoed with far more melodious sounds, I said: "Well, old boy, that was a near thing. I should n't have been a bit surprised if one of those Sinn Feiners had shot you from the gallery." "Oh well," he replied, putting his tie straight, "it would n't have been such a bad way out." But even then he was not quite out of the wood, because when we left the

building in a taxicab we were chased by several of the audience in a crowded car who did their best to bump us opposite, ironically enough, to the Cathedral in which they probably said their prayers.

II.

My brother Philip is another of the men who, if not a prophet in his own country, was given an amazingly kind welcome in America and made to feel that his unwearied interpretation of the spirit of the war was fully appreciated by a people who pulled their whole weight when they took an oar in the allied boat. During his three visits to the United States he was shown how good a thing American friendship is and how generously the word "hospitality" is interpreted by a warm-hearted country. It might have turned the head of a less modest person, and he certainly is that. I shall never forget bumping into him one morning in London during the first weeks of the war and listening in astonishment to his description of being put under a sort of arrest for having, as an unofficial war-correspondent, helped to carry wounded and dying soldiers out of a building somewhere in Belgium that was being shelled at night. The Gilbertianism of such treatment made him roar with laughter, although he had an uncomfortable

feeling that he had dished his chances of ever getting into France. Unfit to be a fighting man, he already had a passion, much as he hated war, to build up a monument to the courage, endurance and humour of the British Tommy and his temporary officer, to the gallant youth of England which poured unfalteringly into the service of his country and of France and fell in such terrible numbers under the great German machine of death. That was, he felt, the least that he could do, — and how well he did it! Only the official war-correspondents who watched his feverish work under the handicap of continual nervous strain upon a constitution that was only held together by a determined mastery of mind over matter and a high sense of duty, could give a true picture of this man during all those years — the master pacifist in uniform, tapping nightly on his typewriter those documents of human effort and almost indescribable suffering that were read with such emotion and exaltation by the English-speaking world. It is difficult to understand how he ever got through, so apparently delicate and fragile as he is, a martyr to nervous breakdowns before the war. There was, however, something a little misleading in his ascetic face and small frame, because he was capable, then, at any rate, of greater physical and mental strain than men of far stronger physique,

and every time he ought by rights to have been dead he was up and at it again and yet again.

I love, admire, and respect that man with a love passing that of a brother, and I look back at years of the closest sympathy and pal-ship with very warm feelings. I well remember how in the old days when we played the war-game together with hundreds of tin soldiers he used to shudder at my fiendish joy in blowing them to bits with cannon charged with gunpowder and small shot. And I shall never forget how he grinned at my horror at finding him, one afternoon, after I had won a way through all the guards of the Harmsworth garrison, seated in a huge room hung with portraits of that modern Napoleon's ancestors in the capacity of Literary Editor of the *Daily Mail* when it seemed to me that he should still have been playing soldiers in the safety of the parental roof. Under conditions and through adventures which would have broken other men he has remained tight-lipped though pale — always pale, ready at any time of the day or night to use that magic but mostly indecipherable pencil with a concentration disturbed as little by the rattle of small talk, the throb of printing presses, or the shatter of guns.

There has been so much written about the late Lord Northcliffe that it would appear to be rather like digging up a patch out of which every potato

has been removed to add anything as to his character here. As a matter of fact I knew him rather slightly and for years had made him a subject of satire in dialogues and other ephemeral pieces of journalism which did not help towards a better acquaintanceship. All the same I knew him well enough to realise the sincerity of his bull-headed patriotism, his dynamic energy, his loyalty to his friends and family, and his perfectly human love of power. He was a strange mixture. There was in him something of the overweening vanity of Cosimo de' Medici, his love of palaces and pomp, and the iron-handed simplicity and dogmatism of Oliver Cromwell, — nothing whatever of Napoleon to whom he was compared so frequently. He had the gift in his middle age of standing outside his skin and looking at himself with enough humour and true scrutiny to prevent the sort of swollen-headedness that makes a man ridiculous. He was, of course, always conscious of the fact that he had made himself an illegitimate Dictator who went about with a bomb in his hand, but, on the whole, he used his alarming power with a high sense of responsibility and great enjoyment. He had good blood, which told very often, and like all men who achieve leadership and hold it had the knack of appointing to his staff officers of great ability whom he could trust through thick and thin. He

built himself a more amazing mausoleum in Carmelite House than ever the Grand Dukes of Florence did with the aid of Michelangelo, Donatello and the rest.

I wrote for his numerous magazines, the *London* and the *Red*, but not more often than three times, I believe, for the ever dramatic *Daily Mail* whose metier it was, and is, to provide the English breakfast-table with a bomb. Once I wrote a flippant article for the famous fourth page on dramatic critics, — a most unwise proceeding and one which laid me open to many small revenges. Another time, with the impish desire to raise a little storm, I came out with an article on the over-payment of leading actors which not only drew many angry protests in the shape of correspondence to the paper, but caused several of these charming men to cut me dead in the street. And then Northcliffe sent for me, asked me to follow up a series of articles by H. G. Wells on Labour unrest, and when I said that I knew too little about the matter to fall in with his desire, told me to choose any subject I liked and go ahead. And so, with a perfectly free hand, I wrote a short series called "Father and Son, the Problem of the Middle Class", in which I endeavoured to prove the futility and worse of the growing habit on the part of hard-working parents of sending their sons to the great public schools

and then to Oxford and Cambridge, thus adding to the list of unemployables a number of young men who had become neither fish, flesh, nor good red herrings, ashamed of their homes, too lofty to knuckle down to the work of clerks, and for whom there was nothing eventually but emigration to Canada there to begin all over again at the bottom of the ladder. The keynotes of these papers were the snobbishness of the middle class and the unfortunate manufacture of wasters, which resulted as a matter of course. Hundred of letters poured into the paper agreeing and disagreeing with my views, which were perfectly sound, and the postman laboured up the hill to my cottage every morning for several weeks with great resentment at the size of my mail.

Speaking of one's letters there are daily not more than two or three, probably, that are amusing, or that repay the trouble of opening. The telephone has killed the excellent art of letter-writing which makes the memoirs of pre-progressive people so charming and so valuable. One can hardly imagine a Chesterfield of 1923, or even a Gladstone with the post-card habit in these so rapid, yet so unachieving times. What used to be written with wit, a nice formality and a studied turn of phrase is now spoken through an instrument in the briefest and most careless English, touched with an

irritation that follows the invariable wrangle with the invisible operator whose ambition it seems to be to prove that progress has its drawbacks.

This is not by any means to say that letter-writing has ceased; the amount of one's mail is far more than a sufficient proof of that. Charity organizations still write and with all the cunning of professional pleaders urge the adoption of orphans, "How many will you take?", lay claim to a certain amount of one's wardrobe, especially overcoats, and take great pleasure in announcing the fact that, by a unanimous vote of the board of governors, one has been elected as a life member of the institution for a little matter of a thousand dollars. Bond dealers also fly to the pen, or rather the type-machine, and even if one has only met them once, and then in the most casual way, are kind and persistent enough to follow one through the rest of life with alluring lists of unheard-of shares which they highly recommend. As for insurance men, their hints of impending death by natural causes or accidental means pour in with the most depressing regularity. And if once one has lived in the country one's name is permanently on the list for long and intimate letters in regard to the ailments of trees, which wind up with what is in the nature of a hint that the writer shall be appointed their family practitioner on a regular

yearly stipend. Dressmakers dash off frequent notes in a bold Spencerian hand, on the most expensive paper, sometimes with a crest, and with a mixture of camaraderie and enticement announce the arrival of exclusive things from Paris. I shall certainly be a very dull dog if I don't hurry my wife to the shop. Tailors warn one not to be so foolish as to miss their new importations of Scotch and Irish homespuns which are certain to be snapped up fast. Photographers never write. They telephone. One can always tell a photographer by the purring of her voice. "Let us take you just for the joy of the thing. We love to take a picture of such a face as yours. It renews our optimism, and pray understand that there is not the least obligation to buy." One has frequent cheery letters from the makers of soap and candies, ties and shirts, books and fishing-tackle, and even dentists find time, as they cross their bridges, to send out unpleasant reminders of cavities and worse.

Among my own particular letters are those from the mute, inglorious and usually illiterate Miltons who claim from me a detailed statement as to how they may become the authors of books as successful as "If Winter Comes" or "Babbitt" without the egregious fag of learning how to write, and the numerous embryo Pineros who see no reason why they shouldn't achieve another "Mid-Channel"

if I will only tell them how. Almost every day, too, I am the most unwilling recipient of offers, generally from women, to collaborate with me, either in a play or a novel. They have a wonderful idea, never, oh no, never used before. In fact, it is the story of their lives. And always, after the announcement of the title of a book that I have written, I am inundated with indignant screeds from people who thought of using the same title for something they never intended to write, with the demand for a substantial sum as heart-balm.

Lately it has become quite the fashion for débutantes — how soon conventions die — to apply for the leading part in any play that I may have ready. It must, of course, be the leading part. Condescendingly enough they inform me that they like my kind of stuff, and being fed up with dancing and the same old giddy round, are ready, the salary being high, to make the stage a career without ever having been nearer to it than the second row of stalls. "I am a very beautiful girl, with a priceless voice and the most wonderful sex charm." This epidemic has spread, it seems, to college boys, who, not having been born the sons of wealthy fathers and thus been rendered immune from work, require introductions to a movie magnate in order that they may take the place of Wallace Reid. Anything else won't do.

They would rather start at the top and fall to the bottom than start at the bottom and rise to the top. Life is too short. To blow in an enormous salary while they are young enough to enjoy it is better, it appears to them, than to wait, and work — how they detest that frightful word — until they are too old. "Not having been anywhere near a studio, I should bring, you understand, a lot of new and valuable ideas to leading parts."

Then there are almost daily letters from the most heterogeneous creatures who would enjoy light employment as my secretary. They don't know shorthand and they cannot type, and, if their letters are any criterion, they cannot even spell. Nevertheless they entertain an almost psychic feeling that I am the one and only man to hand them a weekly cheque. Some of them assure me that they are decorative, companionable and not very easily depressed. Their influence will put new life into my pen, a new gusto into my labour. Others, being highly intellectual and not in the first flush of giddy youth, will steady my enthusiasm and sober down my point of view. One or two would come for next to nothing, something really nominal, say fifty dollars a week, because they would like me to teach them the rough outline of novel writing, which they know would give me great pleasure. Others, again, would attend

my workshop daily, for fifty percent of my royalties, and write my books themselves, thus freeing me to go and play golf or walk about the streets. It might take a month or two before they got into the hang of the job, but they have no objection to that.

But the brightest, and I'm inclined to think the brainiest, letter that I ever received was written by a young and cheery soul who had been sent down from Oxford for running a fake roulette table and who fell on his feet in the war, out of which he emerged as a major, D. S. O., M. C. He lived on me for a month or so after the armistice and wore my best ties, and then, when I kicked him downstairs, made glad music with a cornet in an ex-soldiers' band. "Dear old bean," it ran, "a brain wave. How rare, how epoch-making! I got it in a dream. Not in any definite capacity, but for the run of my teeth, I come to live with you once more, a laughter-maker, a renewer of optimism, a constant thing of joy. Your clothes fit me exactly, so I should always do you credit. Down at ten or so, I could save you the trouble of reading the paper, order fresh cigarettes, be on hand for golf or tennis, or, if wet, a corking game of pills. Very fond of children, I could teach the young idea how to shoot, take the dear wife to the theatre, buzz round at tea fights and be a steady fourth at bridge.

All for nothing, old bean. What do you say?" I said No, with many thanks.

III.

My own experiences in public speaking, some of which have been unfortunate and others amusing, also began in America. My feeble political efforts at home never went for anything. My maiden speech in America was made on the otherwise empty stage of the Teck Theatre at Buffalo, when the manager who was running "The Blindness of Virtue" ballooned me into acting as my own press agent, in the Channing Pollock way, a week before the play was to try its luck in that city after opening in Montreal with an English company. I was to speak, if you can imagine it, on the teaching of sex truths to children, that being the underlying thesis of the piece. I need hardly say that it was a question that I had gone into closely and upon which I was extremely keen. I would much rather, for all that, as speak, it seemed, I must, have broken the ice with a talk about books and plays, golf and Lloyd George. I had not prepared a sentence, and as I walked up and down behind the curtain waiting with terror for the orchestra to come to an end of what I took to be my dirge I turned suddenly, like a horse from a jump, and made a dive for the stage door. I am afraid

that an overwhelming force of cowardice, which I am perfectly certain comes from a weak stomach, would have landed me into the nearest cab but for the clutch of the official advance-agent which held me tight. "What's the great idea?" he asked. I told him, struggling to escape. And he laughed. "Say," he said, "you needn't get the woozies about an audience like this. It's some time since they've heard a damn fool Englishman. You'll get over on your accent and your trousers." And I suppose I did, because although I spoke for an hour no bad eggs were flung at me and only half a dozen people left the theatre in utter boredom. I was horribly disconcerted all the while by one of the stage hands who stood in the wings with his mouth open and his eyes filled with pity. When I tottered from the stage, feeling like an empty tin of gasoline, he came up, looked me all over, chewing like a deliberate cow, and said: "My five children cud tell me more about all that stuff in five minutes than everything you've preached at them folks out in front in sixty-three." And I haven't the smallest doubt that he was right.

But it was in Chicago that I discovered how deep-rooted the lecture habit had become in the United States. For a reason which I am sure it will be wise to ascribe to the New York theatre system, and leave it at that, "The Blindness of

Virtue" was first booked for a run in that city and immediately afterwards announced as for "two weeks only." The company, which was a fine one, consisted of Arthur Holmes Gore, killed later at Gallipoli, Pollie and Louie Emery, who had played in the London production, Doris Lytton, Madge Murray, a niece of J. M. Barrie, my young brother Arthur, who wanted to see America, Lena Halliday, who gave an admirable performance of the Vicar's wife, and Basil Hallam, who died during an attack on his tied balloon. The New York critics were more than kind about the play and it would have remained for several months at the Thirty-Ninth Street Theatre, but for the fact that William Morris, having been given two weeks only before the play arrived from Buffalo, took a theatre in Chicago into which to move it at the end of its allotted span in New York, and moved it there. Once again I was requested to go ahead of the play and beat the big drum, and this I did, filled with the usual misgivings. My first day in Chicago was typical of the rest. I started at the bottom of a huge building that faced the lake at nine o'clock in the morning and gradually worked up to its most exalted floor before falling face downwards on my bed in a condition of complete exhaustion at half past eleven that night. I spoke to five different societies during the course of that awful

day, and before each one faced three or four hundred eager women who had come with the hope that I might be able to give them something to take away. I don't know what it was that I gave them except, as it seemed to me, my various limbs and every atom of what nervous force I had. And I know that at the last meeting, in the middle of an impassioned appeal for the younger generation, so frightful an aching started in one of my teeth that the tears which began to stream down my face moved the audience to deep sympathy and a firm belief that my subject had carried me into something far better than mere eloquence. The aching kept me in agony all that night but it established a reputation of undoubted sincerity which helped me vastly on my difficult way. It was after I had spoken for an hour to the Drama League of America which has its headquarters in Chicago and has done so much to help the stage, that a little lady came up to me with a rather curious twinkle in her eyes and said, warmly, "I didn't understand a word you said, but I just loved your accent."

Speaking in public became a little easier to me after my war service because of the vast amount of practice I gained then from addressing meetings on behalf of the Red Cross, the Y. M. C. A., the Salvation Army, the Liberty Loans, recruiting

missions and propaganda campaigns. I spoke at a crowded meeting at the New York Harvard Club to a splendid body of men who had been in training at Plattsburg, when that fine soldier General Leonard Wood was in the Chair; in the open air on Governor's Island to the soldiers of the A. E. F., to Officers' Training Corps at the Universities, and to the boys at Lawrenceville and the other schools. I spoke in the music gallery of the ballroom of the now departed Sherry's to the members of the Junior League who were making bandages below, and never once looked up; to the German-American and Irish-American members of the American Express Company who had expected to see another kind of moving picture to the one I made of myself; and twice I stood on a grand piano in an immense armory, in which I never expected to be heard, and told a vast audience of the spirit that would win the war. I was once on the same platform with another ex-British officer, a gallant and extraordinary man, who carried the audience into huge laughter and enthusiasm by his dramatic attitudes and the fact that, because he spoke in so broad a Lancashire accent, no one understood a single word he said. And while I was suffering from colitis which did its best to put me in my grave I addressed a large meeting of doctors not one of whom was aware of the obvious fact that I

could hardly stand on my feet. Probably my most tragic experience, however, was the one which happened to me the morning after I had assisted at the opening of a most efficient building that had been presented to a Young Women's Christian Association by a kind lady of the town, — one of the numerous pleasant Oranges, some little distance from New York. I was asked there to speak the following morning, which was Sunday, although I had forgotten that when I accepted to do so. It was also, as it turned out, the Fourth of July, and when I was driven by my hostess's daughter to a church nearby I was convinced that there was some mistake. I had spoken almost everywhere, but never in a church. I was just in time to be placed in a procession of clergy and choir followed by soldiers and sailors carrying flags which were to be stacked near the altar. It was a large and beautiful church, filled to the doors, and after the procession had been played in by the organ I found myself sitting next to the Choir Master prepared to take a reverent part in an impressive and dignified service. I had entirely dismissed all thoughts of the possibility of doing anything more than that, when presently, however, the Choir Master touched my arm and whispered, "In the middle of the next verse you will take your place on the top step under the arch and speak for

twenty minutes." I was covered with confusion and terror. A church — an Englishman — the Fourth of July . . . how was I to live up to this great and utterly unexpected responsibility? I gave myself up for lost, — and in doing so arrived at the proper and generally unusual state of humbleness in which men are helped. Indeed I prayed as never before that some kind and adequate spirit might take possession of me and put into my mouth something worthy of this solemn occasion. I don't know whether I spoke for too short or too long a time, or what I said. But when I returned to my place in the choir, and my ordinary condition of mind, I was wet to the skin. That a spirit had come to my rescue was an absolute certainty because, later on, the Vicar expressed his gratitude in very kind words.

When I speak now, and I do so as rarely as possible, and only because I think the mind needs as much exercise as the body, and that it is good for a man to do the thing of which he is afraid, I wrench myself into believing that I am walking up and down my room dictating to my secretary, and I still persist in the practice of preparing nothing because, having frequently been obliged to endure the pain and irritation of listening to other men deliver themselves of a learned-by-heart speech, I think it a greater compliment to an audi-

ence to give them something entirely impromptu and unrehearsed, however stammeringly and incoherently it may come. Also because I think it affords them something of excitement and joy to speculate as to how soon I shall dry up, fold up, and fall in a heap on the floor. There are few things less endurable in this life than to sit in front of one of those all too glib and confident orators who, with appropriate gestures that have been studied in front of a glass, or at a school of public speaking, go from prelude to peroration in one wavy unceasing stream.

A story goes that two men were engaged to deliver lectures at an Industrial Institute in which there were classes for unfortunate people who were deaf and dumb and those who had been born or afterwards gone blind. Inefficiency or nervousness on the part of the Director resulted in the man who was to speak with his fingers being sent into the room in which the blind were assembled to listen to a talk on the works of Carlyle, and the one who spoke in the ordinary way being placed before a room full of people who hoped to follow a dissertation on the life and death of Dante in the language of signs. The first of the two to realise this frightful blunder was the silent speaker who, after being shocked and surprised by all the unresponsive faces at which he looked for encourage-

ment and sympathy, turned and fled from the building, leaving his friend still standing in front of the deaf and dumb giving forth in rich ripe tones. An equally dreadful mistake was played on me, when a kind but careless lady, who had wrongly gathered that I was in sympathy with Women's Suffrage, took me to a stronghold of the suffragettes. Under the belief that I was talking to a body of charming and domestic women with hands that rocked the cradle and ruled the world, I had just got into a bitter tirade against their fanatical sisters who had lately tied themselves to the railings of the House of Commons when every woman in the room rose as one man and flung execrations at my astonished head. If I hadn't been very nippy on my feet, I should most probably have been buried in the cellar of the club.

A few months before I sailed for America to see Charles Frohman and put the final touches to the rehearsals of the London company that was to try its luck there, I dined one night at the mess of the Royal Army Medical Corps, among whom I had several very good friends. I was a little disconcerted when, halfway through the meal, the little bird-like lady on my left, with a pair of abnormally strong glasses, asked me for something that I was wearing and said that she would then give me a peep into the future. This being one of the things

that none of us can ever resist I gave her my handkerchief as the least noticeable article of clothing that I could shed at such a time, and she put it to her forehead and thought deeply. I had been told that she was in the habit of being consulted by members of the Cabinet, Society and Scotland Yard, so I waited on tenterhooks for what she was about to discover to me. I was not then and I am not now one of those confident persons who, calling themselves scientists, or coming from Missouri, imagine there is nothing new under the sun and refuse to believe in anything that has not happened personally to them, like whooping cough, a motor accident or bankruptcy. When the little lady began to tell me that I was in a state of indecision and was unable to make up my mind as to which of three contracts to sign for the play's American engagement that were lying on my desk, of which I had said nothing to her, and went on to advise me to leave them all alone and wait until the following Friday when a man would put in an appearance at the Little Theatre with whom it would be wise to sign, I waited to see whether he would come and who he was. He came, according to prognostication, and he was William Morris, Harry Lauder's impresario, who, I believe, was more experienced in the business of vaudeville than that of the legitimate stage. At any rate he was a nice

man, he gave me an absolutely free hand, and was very willing to take the play to America exactly in the form in which he saw it in London, — and the other managers were not, — and so I signed with him as the lady with the short but second sight had so strongly advised. I am not prepared to say whether I made a fatal mistake in so doing, because, having perfectly normal eyes, I cannot see what sort of treatment I should have had from the other men. There is not much, in any case, to choose between them and William Morris was, though not infallible, an enthusiast, and he did his best. No man can do more than that. Since then, however, I have given my handkerchief to no one, but have been content to place myself in the hands of an able agent who, although he sometimes wears glasses, and is not endowed with the gift of second sight, endeavours to avoid the various pitfalls that lie in wait for men of my profession who are notoriously unbusinesslike.

I sailed on the ill-fated *Oceanic* in the August of 1912 and looked forward with keen pleasure to the first of my numerous Atlantic crossings. Before the ship had left Southampton I was flattered by the attention of an extremely good-looking, athletic, well-groomed youngish man, who insisted on walking the deck with me. He took the trouble to let me know, very shortly after we had broken the

ice, that although that trip was not his maiden one he had only made the Western crossing once. But when, an hour before the bugle sounded for dinner, the purser touched me on the arm as I was following him into the smoking room and murmured the one word "card-sharp," I still went on utterly disbelieving this brutal summing up of a delightful man's profession. Those were the old bad days when America was free, and never dreamed of interfering with the rights of foreign vessels, and so we had a sherry and bitters together in what is now an easy though a criminal way of encouraging an appetite. After which, his hand closing familiarly on a box of dice, he suggested with a naïve smile that we should kill an awkward half an hour by throwing for five pound notes, and I saw, in a disappointed flash, the reason of his flattery. The purser was right, as pursers have a knack of being. And so as much to retrieve myself from his obvious assumption that I was an "easy mark", as to be able to continue a pleasant acquaintanceship without having again to back out of future invitations of the same expensive sort, I made ready to dodge a knock-out blow and told him that I not only had no spare fivers to lose but had a peculiar aversion to losing them to a card-sharp. After a second or two of extreme surprise at my character reading and temerity he burst out laughing, and we walked

the deck together with perfect affability during the whole of the rest of the voyage. He was one of the most interesting men that I have ever met, a student of Dickens and Thackeray with a strong penchant for the Brontës, and as devoted a lover of Italy as Lucas is, with much of the same feeling for its beauty and its treasures. At no cost at all I greatly enjoyed his company and when, six months later, I met him by accident in Delmonico's, with the ruddy colour that comes from sea air and shuffleboard, I was charmed by his eager acceptance of my invitation to dine. In the meantime he had read "Duke's Son" and although he liked my story very much and said so generously enough, at the same time assuring me that he was not much of a hand at modern books, he wound up by regretting that I had not met him before I wrote about cheating at cards, because he could have put me right on several points. He died fighting gallantly, and probably as humorously, in the war.

IV.

Robert Lorraine was on the *Oceanic* that time, too. He was taking out a company for a second tour of "Man and Superman", in which he gave an admirable performance. Sidney Valentine was with him and so was Cissie Loftus, whom I often persuaded to sit at the piano and give her exquisite

imitations of well-known singers, when everybody else was on deck. If Lorraine was a fine actor, as he is still, and a golfer who raced from green to green as if he were on a Cook's tour of the course, he was, even then, a most intrepid though somewhat heavy-handed flying man. He had a way of smashing his machine almost every time he made a landing. Be that as it may his passion for flying was so strong that he deserted the stage for long stretches at a time in order to master what was then a new terror to civilisation, with the subconscious feeling, no doubt, that he was eventually to dedicate his knowledge to the service of his country, as he did, of course, with great daring and distinction. He was, I believe, the first man who flew to Ireland, and his description of this feat, told in his dry, rather abrupt manner, totally devoid of heroics, made good hearing. He went headlong into a storm, lost his bearings, and not because he had made up his mind that he was doomed to drown at sea but because of the annoyance of hailstones in his eyes, he wept with pain and rage, dived eventually to put an end to a quite unbearable state of things, and woke up next morning well bruised, and much astonished to find himself lying on one of the greens of an Irish golf course, surrounded by a little crowd of gaping people who, if they had ever heard of Wells, must have imag-

ined themselves to be in the presence of an inhabitant of another dimension. In the war, during which he became a Flight Commander, with enough ribbons to make a counterpane, it was his playful habit to drop sarcastic and probably rather Shavian messages on the German lines every evening when he returned to his own. He flew low to do this successfully and for far longer than he deserved escaped whole from their anti-aircraft guns. But one fine night they laid for him and in payment for his cool cheek and nasty notes, filled him with shrapnel which he took to bed for a considerable time, and while he was being picked over by surgical experts probably worked out every detail of the production of "Cyrano de Bergerac", which, Heaven only knows why, it was one of his determined ambitions to make. These were the only occasions in his life when Lorraine flew low. Before the war and since he flew very high in his profession and was unbeatable in his performances in "Arms and the Man", "Man and Superman", "The Man from the Sea", by W. J. Locke, and "Smith", by Somerset Maugham. In Tree's all star revival of "The School for Scandal", which I suggested to him at a moment when His Majesty's Theatre needed the tonic of success rather badly, Robert Lorraine gave a more human touch to Charles Surface than any actor I had seen before.

But the part that I should like to see him play is Cosimo de' Medici in a play yet to be written and laid in the gorgeous atmosphere of fifteenth century Florence. How well Maurice Hewlett could have written this if he had not been too proud and impatient to truckle to the stage, as he called playwriting! He packed more colour and more drama into his "Richard Yea and Nay" and "Queen's Quair" than are to be found in any historical writing outside that of Shakespeare, I think.

I am often asked whether I put living people into books. It is one of the inevitable questions. The answer, so far as it concerns my own methods, is "Yes and no." Yes, because once I wrote a thing called "The Passing of Arthur", in which, with satire laid on a little too thick, I set out to draw a picture of what I thought would happen when Arthur Balfour had had it hammered into him that the country needed a change of Government and so decided to go through the irksome business of a General Election in order to put the matter to a test. In this somewhat youthful effort every character appeared under his own name. I drew wordy caricatures of Asquith, Lloyd George, Winston Churchill, Campbell-Bannerman, Sir William Harcourt, the Duke of Devonshire, John Burns, Lord Haldane, George Wyndham, some of the

younger politicians, the Irish members and Mr. Balfour himself. I put them all through an exciting election, showed the defeat of the Unionists, the choice of Campbell-Bannerman as Prime Minister and the subsequent scramble for offices. It was awfully good fun to do, but it fell as flat as a pancake. People are not as much interested in politicians as politicians think they are. Long afterwards it was intensely interesting to read Mrs. Asquith's version of this event in one of the first of the volumes of her diary, and there to find that I had not been very far out in my imaginary pictures of the small men and the little events of that amiable time.

Coming to the other half of the answer it is "No" because it is more interesting to create new people in novels than base them on one's friends. Safer too, perhaps, if one is homogeneous. Otherwise one would be obliged to live on a desert island. And yet when I wrote a book called "Keepers of the House", having gone to the trouble of inventing a plot which I thought was too far-fetched ever to have happened to anyone living or dead, and in which there was not a single character remotely like anyone I had ever met or heard of, I was immediately accused by an irate person of having taken his grandfather as the leading protagonist and indecently unearthed an incident in the history

of his family that had been hidden behind a pile of years.

The thing that seems to be too utterly impossible ever to have happened is certain to have taken place yesterday or to be reported in the newspapers the day after tomorrow.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Habit of Work. The Albany, Piccadilly. Early Victorianism. An Amazing Offer. New York. Cosmo Gordon Lennox. Montreal. The Royal and Ancient. A Very Choice Waster. The New York *World*. J. P. Morgan. Melville Stone. The Prophylactic Society. George Jean Nathan. Arthur Train. Reflected Glory. The American Stage. American Dramatists. Irvin Cobb. My Wife.

I.

When a hardworking author, and most authors are hardworking, is seen by a representative of the press, to whom, of course, publicity being essential, he is always at home, the first question asked is how he manages to get through so much work. In the case of W. L. George, who is an unhappy man if he does not achieve an astounding total of several million words a year, of Rafael Sabatini, W. J. Locke, Gilbert Frankau, Phillips Oppenheim, Rupert Hughes, Peter B. Kyne, Sheila Kaye-Smith, May Sinclair, Mrs. Wharton, Gertrude Atherton, Sinclair Lewis, A. S. M. Hutchinson, Booth Tarkington, Arnold Bennett, and especially the fecund H. G. Wells, the answer is by regular hours devoted daily to the grindstone without fail in the manner of any other business man or woman.

Oddly enough such honesty invariably causes a shock, because an author is generally supposed to be a temperamental creature who spends most of his time standing about with a hectic flush, dishevelled garments, and a three-days beard, waiting impatiently for an inspiration, and having caught that most illusive thing dashes madly to a desk and writes all through the night while his adoring and admiring wife sits shivering in her nightgown outside the door of his den to ward off impossible interruption and to feed him on tiptoe with port wine and eggs from time to time and see that he has plenty of matches. This utterly ludicrous idea of the modern author and the modern author's wife persists, I suppose, because the legend of Chatterton and his garret sank deep into the sentimentality of the public, and because he is so often made out to be that kind of comic and disastrous figure by the playwrights of the day. For myself, being fundamentally a very lazy person, who would far rather play than work, and to whom the freedom of the links is at all times far more congenial than the slavery of the pen, I confess that a rigid and regular routine, like that of the banker and the bricklayer, is the only thing that saves me from playing truant from my desk and from falling a victim to that pathetic type of self-deception that is called waiting for an inspiration. As every

writer knows from bitter experience, inspiration is the only thing that cannot be plucked from a bush, or bought over the counter of a shop, and it does not hang about at street corners like the prowling taxicab or pass a given spot at certain times like the Hammersmith motor bus. It is made, on the contrary, out of a mixture of brain fag and elbow grease, if it is ever made, and perfected by a process of concentration and prayer after days and possibly weeks of mental struggle. Then, too, every writer is in a constant state of fear that he may, by letting down and going slack, lose the habit of work — the easiest thing in the world — and so he whips himself into his den every morning, and forces himself to conform to a daily time-table of work. Otherwise he is bound to go through a period of agony and fatty degeneration that will probably remain a nightmare for years. Take the case, for instance, of that famous dramatist who, after three successive hits, permitted himself to rest on his laurels, waste his phosphorus on the fellow-members of his club, and become a sybarite. I shall never forget the pale fear that was on his cherubic face when he came to me one sunny day, broke down his fourth wall as to a confessor and described the symptoms of the ghastly disease that ought to be called, for want of a bastard Latin term, the loss of the power of concentrating the in-

tellectual force. He was fat. It was noticeable. He was also smug and glossy, and his hands were dangerously devoid of the callous spots that come from gripping clubs. He told me that he had undertaken to write a new play by a certain date, had got his plot, characters and construction all lined up, but not having put pen to paper for a year found it impossible to sit for more than five minutes at his desk without inventing an urgent excuse to disturb himself either by using the telephone for an unnecessary call, by reading the paper that had nothing in it for him, or by calling in his valet to listen to the story of his life. This sort of thing had not gone on for days but weeks. His brain had become fat as well as his body. He was in a state of terror. It was pathetic. I advised a vegetable diet, red wine, a pipe instead of cigarettes and a gymnasium. Was I joking? Not at all. I advised him to eschew the club, go to bed early, read a number of books that he had always considered to be piffle so that he might be angered, and go to see only those plays that were to him beneath contempt in order that he might leave the theatre full of ideas as to how they ought to have been written. And then I urged him to sit down every morning from nine o'clock until one and, like a schoolboy doing penance, copy the leading articles of a newspaper without ever once put-

ting down his pen. In this way, I said, he would get the feel of his instrument once more, and recover the art of sitting. Finally, by the grace of God, and his own will to work, he would be able to slip into writing something out of his own head instead of copying something out of the head of another man. Weeks went by. No one caught a glimpse of him. And then as I was coming out of Hatchard's in Piccadilly one afternoon a taxi stopped with the grinding of brakes and out he dashed, thinner, and without fear. "Cosmo," he cried, in a ringing voice, "the cure has worked. I'm all right. I'm going strong. Yesterday at twelve o'clock, I got it back. I wrote, my boy." "Splendid," I said, considerably moved. "What did you write?" "The opening of my new play in my best form. Lady Beecham (sitting at an afternoon tea table in a flamboyant frock), 'Let me see. Is it one lump or two? I never can remember.' Mrs. Melrose (showing a delightful ankle), 'No sugar and no milk. I'm paying the penalty of having had a mother who kept a sweet tooth till the end.'" The play came off at the end of a fortnight but he had got back the habit of work.

II.

Before I continue to jot down some of the things that stick in my memory in regard to my first win-

ter in America, I ought perhaps to give an account of a surprising offer that was made to me, which, if I had accepted it, would have revolutionized all my plans, and either placed me on Easy Street or in a lunatic asylum.

When I first went to live in the Albany, Piccadilly, that quiet and charming oasis between the Grand Canal of London and its Vigo Street backwater, built by the Adams brothers on the gardens of what had been a semi-Royal house of somewhat chequered history, — in which, if you remember, Aubrey Tanqueray was supposed to have had a rather uneasy talk with Cayley Drummell a night or so before he perpetrated the foolish act of marrying the unhappy Paula — I found myself in rooms that were between those of a man who skipped every evening for an hour before dinner, and those of an elderly gentleman of the old school with an ancient valet and an octogenarian Scotch terrier who carried letters to the red pillar box in his mouth at precisely the same moment every night of his life.

Addison had lived there in the days when English had been written with style and since his time it had harboured a series of distinguished men, several eccentrics, a statesman or two, a dozen or so members of the House of Lords, at least one admiral, Henry Arthur Jones, Lewis Waller, Ar-

Capt. Lewis (-Napoleon-Nelson-Wellington-Absolute-) Waller.

In all his parts.

thur Bourchier, and the cricketer hero of Hornung's excellent story who set the fashion for stage crooks. It was a place with a tradition, and when June occasionally flamed and I could sit out on my balcony and watch the stars it "rendered back an echo of the sad steps by which it had been trod." Not that all of them had been sad. Addison sometimes walked jauntily with his friend and imitator Steele, an appropriate name, and some of the Toms, Dicks and Harrys of Cremorne days and nights had a roystering uncertainty that was eloquent of high spirits. It was, indeed, peopled with ghosts, and as much because of that as because its living inhabitants were governed by a Committee which clung to an ancient set of rules and for a long time refused, and rightly, to recognise the necessity of the telephone, it was the temple of a silence which, "like a poultice, comes to heal the blows of sound."

Liking tradition and knuckling down easily to rules, I formed an immediate habit of consulting the convenience of my elderly neighbour below whenever I intended to give a dinner-party, — my skipping neighbour above invariably dined out. Notes were conducted between us, therefore, in some such words as these. "Sir, I have the honour to inform you that it is my intention to give dinner to a few friends on such and such an evening at eight o'clock, when there is a probability that

one or other of them will play my piano. I shall be obliged if you will inform me as to whether this plan meets with your entire approval. I have the honour to be, Sir, etc." To which invariably I received the following answer. "Sir, I have the honour to acknowledge your courteous note and to inform you that the night you have chosen for your dinner-party suits my convenience very well. I will dine at the Club and return at half-past eleven, by which time I trust that your good friends will have closed your piano. I have the honour to be, Sir, etc." This exchange of a pleasant if somewhat conscious early-Victorianism was kept up regularly. We did not speak when we came face to face on the doorstep, never having been introduced, and our distant relationship was never disturbed by any distressing incident. It might have been severely twisted, perhaps, if the old gentleman had recognised me under the oriental make-up of an Indian sheik when, as he was taking the air before breakfast one morning at eight o'clock, I dashed into the Albany followed by several still merry Abdullas and stood frozen beneath his disapproving gaze. But luckily he did n't, and after he had passed us, I led my hungry party up the worn stone stairs on tiptoe. The sudden sight of such people in that place, at such a time, or any other, must have made him be-

lieve that he had come out of sleep into a waking dream.

Some months after that, at about six o'clock one evening, he called upon me formally, and with his very old and rather bronchial dog between his feet, took the most comfortable chair in my workroom, and after a few nasty remarks about the weather, a caustic criticism of the Government, an affectionate reference to his ancient companion, an inspection of my caricatures and a sherry and bitters, propounded the surprising offer to which I have referred. It appeared that he had been to see "The Blindness of Virtue" several times, and not being a consistent theatregoer, having, in fact, seen nothing for over ten years, he liked it very much. "Yes, sir, very, very much." So much, indeed, that as owner of a group of coal mines in Wales and a man of great wealth, he had conceived the idea of buying one of the best of the London theatres for me to which I might transfer that play, and produce others of the same kind whenever it was necessary. He desired, he said, to show his approval of my work by placing me in a position of author-manager, so that I need not be bothered with the difficulty of procuring a suitable theatre at convenient times and could build up an organisation of young and enthusiastic talent, headed by several actors of high reputation.

He mentioned the theatre, told me that he had discovered through his lawyers the sum for which it could be bought, and begged me to turn my attention at once to the necessary details so that the deal might go through with the least possible delay. To one who knew, as I did well, the extraordinary amount of tact, eloquence, patience and heartbreak that went to the landing of such an angel fish as this, who had seen managers in the feverish act of throwing out a dozen lines at a time, temptingly baited, in waters that didn't afford a single bite, and listened to wistful stories of great riches and blinding searchlights told by youngish ambitious actors if exactly such a backer could be found by them, the whole thing sounded like something out of the Arabian Nights. But my caller was obviously the old gentleman who lived downstairs and not a messenger from Mars, and was so perfectly normal, quiet and unmoved that I found my breath, as many of the right words as I could fumble at with which to thank him for his kindness, and asked to be allowed to think the matter over. Certainly. Of course. He would expect to hear from me tomorrow, felt that more rain was coming over, liked the way I had my books, gave forth again about the Government all the way down stairs, waited for "Rover", opened and shut his door. I thought the matter over, saw

that my acceptance of this Santa Claus scheme would not only postpone my visit to America, upon which I was very keen, but would turn me into a worn and harassed creature, doomed to an indoor life, a slave to the sort of constant details that I hated, and a martyr to a responsibility that I was in no mood to undertake. Then, too, the mere idea of making a play factory of myself, with the odds four to one in favour of failure, if not worse than that, and the fearful business of finding plays and money, keeping a friendly stage and standing nightly on the steps, like Sister Anne, to see if anyone were coming, made my answer easy. It was "No," though, naturally, with a full explanation of my point of view, and the deepest gratitude. Later, when I returned the call, the subject was never once referred to until I rose to go, when I was told that if at any time I changed my mind I had only to say so, and the lawyers would be instructed to proceed. I didn't change my mind, nor when I read of the death of that dear old man some nine months later did I change my gratitude. I wonder whether he outlived his dog? If not, whose letters did the once sprightly Rover set out to take to the red pillarbox every night at precisely the same moment?

It is a long way from London to New York. When the weather is fine and the sea smooth, it is

a very pleasant way, at the end of which there is the always dramatic thrill at the sight of those Gargantuan buildings that seem to swarm down to the waterside and stare with thousands of eyes at arriving vessels. When the weather is bad and the sea rough it is to me, who hate discomfort like a Persian cat, a far from pleasant way, during which the only thing to do is to sleep it through and dream of an Elysium on earth. Rough or smooth, the Atlantic crossing never fails, however, to inspire me to a great respect and admiration of the ship which is a human creature, less temperamental than any other though with recognisable characteristics, more conscientious, more determined to do what is expected of her, and fully aware of the fact that the sea resents her presence, is jealous of her strength and whenever the chance comes takes a passionate delight in disturbing her dignity with the crash of waves. The *Titanic* never echoed the boastfulness of the fool who chalked upon one of her boilers "We fear neither man nor God" and like all her sisters knew that in the sea, "unmated creature, tired and lone", was a treacherous enemy whose only pleasure lay in adding to her store of murdered ships.

I went to Canada after a few days in New York, but while in New York I stayed at one of those hive-like hotels in and out of which people swarm

like bees, leaving most of their honey behind them, and in which a man may buy everything from stocks to theatre tickets, with shirts, collars, bootlaces, flowers, books, toothbrushes in between, and have everything done to him from manicure to shaving, from Turkish bath to being bled. But during the brief period that I was there then there was ample time for one of the papers to mix me up with the late Cosmo Gordon Lennox, and, therefore, to give me Marie Tempest for a wife and a chunk of the Peerage to put my head on. And when I rang up the editor and ventured to call his attention to this slight mistake he took it with a probably hard-won philosophy and comforted me with the unarguable assurance that "Tonight's paper is dead, tomorrow's is on the presses", and so, as the statement was never corrected and was copied freely by all the country papers, I still find myself occasionally regarded with more interest than I deserve as the husband of a great actress and delightful woman and sometimes with the black looks of those who have evidently laid their ears to gossip and stored up something unkind and untrue about poor old Gordon Lennox, — a man who dabbled successfully in playwriting, spoke French as well as Guitry, had an irresistible way of saying things that were quoted against him, wore admirable trousers, and possessed a generous

heart. Evidently I was mixed up with someone else as well, because only a year or two ago a good lady with an inaccurate sense of hearing and a passion for minor thrills was very eager to meet me as she had been told that I had deserted a wife and three children in England. She was not only greatly disappointed when I denied this distinction, but extremely nettled when I dragged in a reference to criminal libel. How very few women remember Lot's wife !

III.

In Montreal, a delightful city filled with most hospitable people, where Stephen Leacock, whom I met at tea and who I thought looked like a Scotch artist who had lived in Paris and returned reluctantly to Aberdeen, naturally breaks out into humour as an antidote to lecturing to the students of the McGill and the Directors of the C. P. R. live in splendid houses and look back with very natural pride at the result of their stupendous efforts, I formed an estimate of how "The Blindness of Virtue" was going at its first Canadian performance by watching the movements of the good square jaws of an emancipated woman who sat on an end seat in the middle row of the dress circle with her arms folded across an aggressive bosom. She was chewing gum, a habit that is only in-

dulged in by people with a too high blood pressure, and when her jaws moved slowly and critically I knew that she was bringing the weight of her great brain to bear with caution upon my thesis, but when they moved fast and furiously I was certain that her better judgment was carried away by her emotions, of which she had plenty, despite a pathetic belief, usual to emancipation, that she had surmounted anything so primeval. Striking a quick average I came to the conclusion that her liking of the play was eighty to twenty, with which I was perfectly satisfied. The opinion of Montreal was even better than that. In Ottawa the verdict was the same. So, also, was the hospitality, and when I went to a town in Ontario, outside which I hoped to play golf with my brother and Holmes-Gore, and, arriving at night was greeted with "Welcome to Hamilton" in electric letters on a high building in the Main Street, I considered that Canada had gone almost too far in its kindness, until I remembered that that was the name of the place and was its nightly greeting to the universe. Our game of golf came off on an excellent course on a Sunday morning made dazzling by the turning maple leaf, but not without a preliminary quarter of an hour of complete discomfiture. Without giving a thought to the matter we all three arrived in what are now

called "plus fours" for a reason known only to tailors, but found at once a distinct antagonism on the part of those members of the Club who happened already to be there. We heard some such remark as "swanking Britishers", found our own way to the lockers as no geographical assistance was volunteered and eventually were made somewhat nervous by a gallery that had formed up at the first tee to watch us foozle our drives. All this, of course, made us anxious to pull our best game out of the bag and do what decent credit we could to the old country to which all these boys afterwards streamed in a mighty company to play a more difficult game in France and Gallipoli. My brother, with distended nostrils, went off first, hit his ball well and truly and sent it singing down the straight in plus two form. Holmes-Gore went next with an almost equal peach and I brought up the rear with, by the grace of St. Andrew, a pearler. Followed to the first green by a distinctly less sceptical crowd we all three had the luck to beat our seconds to within a chip shot of the green and drop in bogey. After which we were left alone, our gallery went back to play, we enjoyed the morning of our lives, and on returning to the house for lunch were amused and delighted to find a warm greeting, and places laid at a large table decorated with red,

white and blue. I need hardly say that our afternoon round was rendered erratic by a superabundance of Canadian Club whiskey and much laughter and many cheers. On second thoughts we were not surprised at our dubious reception when we remembered that England had had a fatal knack of packing off some of her choicest wasters to that gallant and unoffending country.

I met one of them there, — or rather he met me. A typical specimen, instantly recognisable in any part of the world. I had just come out of the hotel one evening for a walk, when he slithered out of nowhere with an Eton smile, a Lock hat at the right angle in which he had evidently carried blackberries, no shirt under a Savile Row coat and no socks in a pair of McAfee shoes which only clung to their soles by tradition, but all the charm, easy assurance and quick friendship of his breed, and almost, but not quite, the musical comedy accent. I mean the idiotic way of saying "thare" and "heare", "portar", "waitar", and so on, — comic stuff. "Can you oblige me with a match?" he asked in a bell-like voice. I could and did. Then the flash of teeth. "And a cigarette, if it's all the same?" I had it ready. He rapped it on his thumb-nail, ran his eyes over me, showing at once that he was gracious enough to pass me as a person with whom he might be seen, and fell in

step. Not with any laughter, but in admirable phrases, neatly, wittily, ironically shaped, he scenarioised the chapters of his unwritten history while we swung through the town. A well-known name, fine athlete, Eton to Oxford, an epoch-making funeral following the Dean's square toe; no father, a too-loving and indulgent mother, racing debts, red paint all over his London haunts, Bankruptcy Court; the interference of an abrupt uncle, a passage to Canada with enough money to buy some earth, all lost in the smoking-room of the ship, piano playing in a cinema theatre, bar-tender, railway worker, garage hanger-on, the doss house or an empty bench. Fifteen pounds all that was needed at the moment to spruce him up and put him into a motor-car shop as salesman. "With my smile it ought to result in getting rid of a car a week, what?" I could have told him his story quite easily, I had heard it so often before. The money passed, my apologies were accepted with charming grace, a warm handshake on the steps of the hotel, — and asterisks. Piccadilly. September, 1915. A pretty little girl with adoring eyes, a captain in a Scottish regiment. Mons ribbon. M. C. "Oh, hullo, old bean, how are yar?" And that was all. Probably a brigadier-general, brass hat, red tabs, before the armistice. A man like that was simply born for war.

On my return to New York, two most thoughtful and courteous representatives of the Sunday magazine section of one of its oldest and most famous papers expressed anxiety to initiate me into the mysteries of a baseball game, and I was driven out to an enormous playing ground at the wrong end of Broadway. There I sat in an ice-box with my skin frozen to my bones while my good friends waited eagerly for me to say one of the dam-fool English things that would provide them with a screaming headline. I gathered this, and although I was very willing to oblige, the icy wind that cut my ears and my nose was hardly conducive to the needed line. But it came to me in a brilliant flash halfway through the game. "When do we adjourn for tea?" I asked, and sure enough it ran in large black letters all across the page when Sunday came. I have a warm place in my heart for the New York *World* notwithstanding the fact that it did its best to turn me into an Icelandic fossil. I had the luck to meet William Johnston, one of the kindest and most able men either on that world or this, and through the good offices of Herbert Kaufmann, with whom I frequently burned the midnight oil while he recited his swinging verses in my ear and hammered out his mental tonics with an epigram in every line, I dined at the house of John O'Hara Cosgrave and there met the

dynamic Swope, who knows more of persons and events and interprets them more brilliantly than any man alive, and who has since made the middle page of the *World* essential to one's breakfast for that, among other things, including its fearless leading articles, it gleams with the literary excellences of F. P. A., the poet, tennis-player and mouth-organ executionist, and Heywood Broun, the critic, novelist and father of Heywood 3rd.

Through the publication of a novel of mine called "The Outpost of Eternity", by Appleton and Company, which they did n't like, but which, almost alone, I did, I met Coningsby Dawson, who was then in George Doran's publishing office, writing, during business hours, those funny things that are printed on the paper covers of books and dashing back every evening to the parental home in Newark there to write books, read books and criticise books. He positively revelled in ink. Sinclair Lewis, who has since taken his kodak to Main Street and made a series of picture post-cards that are displayed in every shop-window, a keen, quick, dogged-as-does-it fellow with the Scotch red head that always bobs up at the top of the ladder, whom the fairies intended for a sentimentalist and not a satirist, afterwards occupied his chair in the Doran House when Dawson had found his wings and brought out "The Garden

Without Walls." I shall never forget the surprise of the natives of the village perched high on the Chiltern Hills when Dawson came to stay with me at my cottage there the following summer and danced about on the golf course with his astrakhan hair and Botticelli face looking as though he had come out of one of the great canvases on the walls of the Uffizi, though they did n't know that. The more imaginative among them probably believed that he was the reincarnation of one of the Druid shepherds, whose people had carved the White Cross on the hill, and who had returned to play a wistful pipe to the spring lambs.

Also I met the late J. P. Morgan, with whom I spent an hour in his library which made my mouth water, being dismissed by him when, without a word of warning, he drew himself under his shell like a snail, and disappeared, so to speak, from sight. Prime Ministers have the habit of making exactly the same abrupt physical withdrawal, although their period of exposure generally lasts only about ten minutes; and there was an officer at the Admiralty, from whom I took my orders, who had brought this gift to so high a point that, at what he considered the right moment, he could die in his chair. I met Melville Stone, too, the ambassador of the press, who has a royal memory for names and faces and probably a more intimate

knowledge of what has been going on behind the political scenes of all countries during the past fifty years than any man alive. He has met all the better known kings, cabinet ministers, criminals, freaks, actors, opera singers, authors, editors, faddists and fakes of his time, and I know nothing so good as to keep him sitting over the luncheon table at the Lotos Club while, with his inevitable cigar and constant chuckle, he dips into the fascinating bran bag of his memory. Always kind, he lent his house near Chicago to the motion-picture concern which put "The Blindness of Virtue" on the screen, and I need hardly say that it was the best part of the picture.

One of the incidents of this time standing out most clearly in my mind was a summons to appear before the annual meeting of the Prophylactic Society at the New York Academy of Medicine to render an explanation, if I could, of why I had had the temerity to speak here and there on the subject of teaching sex truths to children. I attended the meeting and listened with deep interest and astonishment to the reports of the Prophylactical professors of the strange roundabout manner in which they tackled this matter in the schools of America. Towards the end of the evening the chairman, a great doctor, announced that there was a man present who had written a play called

"The Blindness of Virtue" or something, and who, though unqualified to do so, had been putting forward certain views, and no doubt the meeting would like to hear what he had to say about it. I rose, was requested to go on to the platform, and from there faced an audience of doctors, teachers, nurses and students who eyed me with what was, I thought, perfectly justified scepticism. Why should a mere playwright butt into so vital and difficult a question? Nevertheless I ventured, extremely nervously, to criticise the methods to which we had been listening, and to say that I believed that there was a better way to enlighten our budding adolescents as to the meaning of sex than by drawing a timid and prurient analogy between them and fish. That was utterly to remove all the screens to the chinks of which they could put the eyes of curiosity, and to tell them the exact truth in the sort of simple and inspiring words which would prove that they held the great gift of giving life and thus a tremendous responsibility to themselves and to the future of the race. I said that I considered that it was the duty rather of parents than of teachers or of doctors to do this thing, except in the cases where false modesty and lack of courage reigned in their houses, and I wound up what, I am afraid, was a very feeble effort by making an urgent plea that God, in spite

of all the creeds and their jealousies, should be put back into the schools. Agnosticism, unfortunately, marches always with civilisation, bringing it ultimately to the point of individualism and decay. The only hope of a high and permanent civilisation was when "persuasion and belief had ripened into faith, and faith become a passionate intuition."

I think that I am right in saying that this particular appeal was received with some amusement. The scientific mind has a way of regarding God as one of the rather pleasant myths, something that cannot be put into a bottle, and declared to contain certain definite ingredients, something that might be left with a shrug of the shoulders to the benighted peasant and other lamentably ignorant people. It was, indeed, quaint that a man who wrote plays and things, and therefore might be supposed to possess at least the average intelligence, should dish up an old superstition at a meeting such as that. Prophylactic? Why, the very word stood for all that was new, advanced and spectacled. Without the smallest hope of doing more than throw a pebble into the sea, I went back to my rooms in a white heat and wrote a little book called "A Plea for the Younger Generation" which George Doran published in his usual artistic manner, and it did n't make even a

ripple on the waters. Beautifully coloured pictures of fish are still in use, of course, and the small boys and girls who have not found out all that there is to know in the worst and most damaging way probably go from Prophylactic lectures to read Boccaccio and peep through keyholes. *Cui bono?*

IV.

I dictated a novel called "The Door that Has No Key" that winter in a large and comfortable sitting room in the Royalton overlooking Forty-third Street, and as I laid line upon line to each of the chapters I could see, and hear, brick being piled on to brick in the erection of Stern's new building, after the nerve-shattering business had been happily completed of drilling red-hot pins into its iron skeleton with an exaggerated specimen of the implement used by dentists on faulty molars. Concentration became a feat, and I was obliged to adopt a sort of recitative as opera singers do when they have to keep things going between the much applauded numbers. There was a fireman's station a few doors down that street and it was a noticeable thing that almost every evening at half-past nine a fire broke out within its radius of action and out dashed those glorious horses to the dramatic wrangle of a bell.

Gasoline has replaced them now, it is good to

know, but I wonder in what way they are putting their strength and courage to use? In circuses, do you suppose, or have they dwindled into the shafts of the patient flies that hang about outside the Plaza for old-fashioned customers and invalids? "That which is now a horse, even with a thought the rack dislimns, and makes it indistinct, as water is in water."

George Jean Nathan, the *enfant prodigue* of critics, was one of the Royalton bachelors, and I used to picture him up among his dictionaries hunting for obsolete words, and, failing, coining them, for his monthly mosaics in the *Smart Set* on the "Draymer." He still looks as young and angelic as ever, and still flays the successful Mr. Belasco every season with his jambok, and with the same joy, devotion and erudition knocks down theatres, operates on authors and holds hardworking actors up to diabolical ridicule by the seats of their pants. One would imagine that he sits on gravestones and spends his nights with ghosts. Perhaps that accounts for his rather melancholy air.

It was in one of New York's many hospitable houses that I met Arthur Train, lawyer and novelist — an unusual combination — under, to him, peculiarly awkward circumstances. He had, I believe, started writing his latest novel, to which

he had given the excellent title of "S. O. S." in London, and not being able to find an appropriate name for his villain hunted through the Red Book until, with a thrill of joy, he came across mine. The novelist in him conquered the natural caution of the lawyer, and with a modesty that obviously made him believe that his book would never be published in England, where I might see it, he called his quite unscrupulous black sheep Cosmo Hamilton without a single qualm of conscience. I knew nothing of this, and was therefore a little surprised at his turning as white as the tip of the Jungfrau upon my being introduced to him. Also I was increasingly disconcerted to notice that whenever I caught his eyes across the table they were filled with an expression of legal calculation as who should say : "Um, I wonder how strong this man's case is and whether he's the sort of person who will take advantage of an opportunity to play Shylock and get his pound of flesh." It was not, however, until the ladies had left the dinner table that the key to the mystery was given, and Arthur Train drew up a chair and made an earnest *apologia pro vita sua.* Oddly enough a case had just occurred, making all writing men much more careful in choosing names for their characters, in which a novelist had had to pay substantial damages for using quite unconsciously the

name of a living person, and this had been widely discussed. The point was what was I going to do about it, and all I could suggest was that I should read the book, see for myself exactly how detestable I had been made out to be, and either put myself into the hands of another lawyer and go for heart-balm, — or not. So Arthur Train took me home with him that night and presented me with a copy of "S. O. S.", and he must have undergone a curious sensation, given to few authors, at seeing the titular materialisation of one of his brain children walking about his study. I must confess that, having read the book, I was more than a little hurt to discover that my name was the only one among millions which seemed to Arthur Train to fit the despicable creature of his imagination, and so I let several days go by, in order to keep my brother of the pen on well-deserved tenterhooks, before I gave him the only possible decision: "It doesn't matter in the very least."

Confusing as it is to find one's name running all the way through a book, it is not anything like so confusing as to be told, when one knows that one isn't, that one is living in some style in a popular river resort and spending money like water in the entertainment of a circle of friends, because the question immediately arises as to why it is being done and how soon one will be wanted by the po-

lice. This had happened to me a year or so before the New York episode, when I borrowed a card out of the pack of my impersonator, used the name of a reporter of one of the London papers and wrote to him to ask for an appointment for the purpose of getting a few details as to his, or rather my, forthcoming novel. Most graciously an afternoon was named, and taking a man from Scotland Yard with me to hold a watching brief I called at a smart little house, blazing with geraniums, and found a well-groomed young man standing in a literary attitude in the middle of a self-conscious study in which there were many more copies of my various books than I had ever possessed. He struck me very pleasantly as a perfectly normal person, charming and affable, and quite ready to give all the information that was required. Everything about the house suggested the possession of means and good taste. But although he supplied us with tea and cigarettes he was very vague on the subject of the book in question, although he gave his views, quite intelligently too, on what he held to be the purpose of the novel. The interview was very nice and quiet and he had many enthusiastic things to say about his brother authors. In fact he quoted me without a stumble on Kipling, Wells, Arnold Bennett and Maurice Hewlett, and told us that he had recently been talking to

Rafael Sabatini about the possibility of dramatising a novel of his which dealt with Caesar Borgia. This he had picked up from a paragraph in the theatre news of the *Daily Express*. It was all very interesting, amusing, curious and puzzling. There was no sign of lunacy about the man although his impersonation proved that he must be suffering from some sort of mental kink. It was all the more difficult to bring the call up to a rough and dramatic finish because I liked him, and was secretly rather flattered at his having chosen me as his obviously favourite author. However, life is short and trains were sometimes punctual on the London and South Western Railway, and so I asked him suddenly who the dickens he really was, what on earth he meant by masquerading under the name of the man who stood before him, and told him that my companion had come from Scotland Yard. His crack was like that of a cocoanut under a crowbar, and just as juicy, because, with tears in his eyes, he begged us to believe that he meant no harm, that he was not running up bills in my name, and was posing as me simply in order to steal a little limelight. It was very silly and rather pathetic, but, of course, it had to be stopped, and so his much astonished father was communicated with, the house on the river was sold, and the man who wanted to be an author without the fag

of working a pen took up another hobby somewhere else. As a bachelor with a useful income I hope that he went in, after that shock, for collecting old furniture. There are few better ways of using up superfluous energy. Or, perhaps, he learned to write. In any case it is quite certain that the sale of my books declined to some extent as the result of that afternoon because he had been in the habit of presenting complimentary copies, duly autographed, to his admiring friends. Every little helps.

V.

It did not take longer than a few months in New York to come to the conclusion that the tyranny of the actor-manager system as pursued in London was childish in comparison to the amazing tyranny of the owners of American theatres. These harassed and hardworking men, who never seem to find the least enjoyment in life, and are always in and out of court, running from telephone to telephone, dealing with broken contracts and letters of abuse, and worse than all, devoting what little leisure they may have to hearing people sing, then belonged to two all-powerful groups, and were the proprietors, between them, of nearly every playhouse in the United States, and were less interested in the theatre as a place of good entertainment than as a mass of bricks and mortar, of which

somebody had to be made to pay the rent, in a gigantic system of real estate. Independent managers, or those who belonged to neither group, were, with the exception of Belasco, Charles Frohman, Winthrop Ames, George Cohan, and one or two others, hampered in their efforts to make a living by exorbitant rents and charges, and the absolute necessity of being sent, when it came to touring the country, into whatever theatres, however unsuitable, were empty at the time. It often happened that a comedy depending for its success on a small and intimate house in an intelligent city found itself in a gigantic building in a place devoted to leg-shows where it was utterly lost. In every conceivable way it was a tyranny as pathetic as it was tragic, and was the cause of the untimely death of many a fine play and the stamping out of many a worthy impresario. The increasing popularity of motion pictures and the erection everywhere of palaces in which they were shown gradually had the effect of putting a number of admirable stock companies out of business, and it was very easy to see that the theatre monopolies, as is the case with all monopolies, were reacting upon themselves through the creation of a rival form of popular entertainment which left the old-fashioned drama houses high and dry on mud banks, like disused barges, on a river which had

turned in another direction. It was obvious, too, that disgruntled actors would form a protective association and work towards a strike, and that dramatists, who always stand between the devil and the deep sea, would endeavour to form a guild for the maintenance of their rights. The unfortunate and unnecessary antagonism between actors and dramatists on the one hand and real estate owners on the other was, even then, very strong. Difficulties and dangers, together with the alarming growth of another taste, made the production of plays a hazardous and heartbreaking affair. It was a great pity, especially as America possessed a fine body of actors and actresses and a number of eager and enthusiastic playwrights, who were well able to hold their own against the importation of the work of foreign authors.

I met very few of the latter during my first winter in New York, but later, when I was elected to the Council of the Authors' League, I had the great privilege of sitting with them to discuss the numerous troubles of the game. Augustus Thomas seemed to me to belong rather to the Pinero and Guitry school than to that of Somerset Maugham and other moderns. He was, and is, a constructionist before everything, building his plays with all the care and elaborate design of a Gothic archi-

tect on a firm foundational thesis. But he has never looked at life merely through the somewhat narrow dramatic window. He is a politician and a man of affairs, a fine director and a speaker of urbanity and charm. To the appearance of a country squire he adds kindness, humour and dignity and whenever he rises to speak, which he does with an infectious sense of confidence and enjoyment and a most felicitous manner, his hearers are sure of a good half hour. He delights in the use of French words and neat quotations from the poets, is very sparing of gesture, and talks from his chest. He is the Grandison among playwrights. Channing Pollock is a Latin in feeling and in point of view. He is exuberant and uses strong colours. He has the gift of naïveté and tilts at windmills. He has had a shot at every known form of dramatic writing, which to him is not just a natural method of earning a living but a vocation, a mistress, a craft. He loves melodrama, vivid scenes and primeval man. With his strong face, uncut hair, double tie, a massive and yet buoyant figure, extraordinary vitality and affection, a Niagara-like flow of anecdote and a habit of jumping in where angels fear to tread, Broadway seems to be less his place than Paris, where one would expect to see him holding court at an iron table under the awning of the Café de la Paix,

or beating time with a large cigar to the Boulevardier music in a students' café in the Place Pigalle. A generous, talented, simple soul, he is ever ready to wield a bludgeon for the under dog.

James Forbes is the antithesis of all this, and is as neat, precise and fastidious in his work as he is in everything else. Playwriting is to him, too, a vocation, but it is also an art, to be indulged in with prayer — slowly, devotionally, and with a worship of form and tradition. No slapdash methods for him. He waits with nervous patience for the mood, the place, and the inspiration, and I can no more imagine him being able to put pen to paper unless the pen is new and the paper spotless, his desk in apple-pie order, and the world on tiptoe, than I can imagine Byron writing "Childe Harold" in a window of the Hotel Europe in Venice among the shattering noises of the Grand Canal. For all that Jimmy Forbes is capable of moments of great excitement and deep feeling, and he can be stirred into a Crusader's enthusiasm when all his habits are flung to the winds, as they were in the war. If he had written nothing but "The Famous Mrs. Fair" he would have placed himself at the top of the dramatic tree.

Owen Davis, in spite of his having written more plays than any living or dead man except Lopez de Vega, doesn't look like a dramatist at all, —

though why a dramatist should necessarily look like a dramatist any more than a banker should look like a banker or a man from the marshes like a Norfolk wherry I never can understand. Quiet, dry, kindly, unemotional, slow of speech and accurate, his only indulgence apparently that of tobacco, amazingly patient and sympathetic, one might easily take Owen Davis for a country clergyman who farmed between his duties to his parishioners, regarding the conventional garments of his cloth as affectation and therefore going about in tweeds cut by the village tailor, who was also probably an elder of the church. A forthright, simple, dogged man, deliberately human, honest almost to a fault and capable of fighting like a bulldog for his cause, liking laughter and good fellowship and a little wine for his stomach's sake. In spite of which, and all these points of character are essentially Davis, he has dealt in more blood and thunder, seduction, roguery, virtue conquering vice, loud rough voices and sweet tears, farfetched stories of Polly the working girl and the smooth-tongued villain in the factory office, than any dramatist in England and America — it might not be, indeed, a wild flight of fancy to say the earth. With his coat off, a box of cigars at his elbow, and a gallon of ink on the floor, it has been his habit for many years to grind out a play or so

a week. There must be literally hundreds to his name. What he does not know about the theatre is n't, in fact, knowledge. It might be conceived that now, in middle age, he would turn from such a job with the deepest sigh of relief, and if it were necessary to go on working, become a clergyman or take up the cold-blooded profession of breeding fish. But no. Having put into a harbour of his own making, he has scuttled the old ship in which he traded as a dramatist and turned deliberately playwright. It must have been as great a mental struggle as to go from fifty cigarettes a day to one, from the daubing of strong colours on the railings of public parks to the painting of miniatures. The still more astonishing thing about it is that he is just as successful in his work as a playwright as he was in that of a dramatist. "Icebound" has proved the truth of that.

Montague Glass turned from lawyer to playwright almost overnight, and if it is true that laughter makes men fat then he is responsible for an appalling increase in the girths of all his audiences. And there are many others who are getting used to reading of the American invasion of the London, instead of the English invasion of the American, stage. And there is Eugene O'Neill, the apple of the critics' eyes. Presently, when he has won the right to call himself the only living

writer who counts, Hergesheimer may devote some of his great abilities to the stage. Meantime the Theatre Guild finds no great difficulty in providing its subscribers with fare to suit their appetites and Professor Baker continues optimistically at Harvard University.

Among other unforgettable pleasures that were mine during that New York winter was the one of meeting Irvin Cobb, though I was not able then to number myself among his friends as I am, happily, now. I cannot remember in whose house it was that I first saw and heard Cobb, but his sudden infectious laugh and one of his lightning flashes of humour over the preliminary cocktail made it certain that I was in for a good evening. And I was. I eyed him slowly gathering strength during dinner, watchful to begin with, observant, a little impatient of a rather formal service, giving a warm welcome to anything approaching wit, but bothered by his collar, and conveying the impression that he would have been happier in an open-necked soft shirt and riding breeches than the horrid garments of conventional wear. I sympathised with him in that. Then, with the sweets, something reminded him of an appropriate anecdote of which, getting the attention of all at the table, he made a Rabelaisian chapter. From that moment until the end of an evening during which laughter echoed

from the walls, he went from one most gorgeous story to another, each time building up an Eiffel Tower of right and Cobbish words and firing off his various points with the unerring aim of a sharpshooter. The colour, characterisation, and invention with which he invested these, sometimes being forced to laugh at his own ebullience of humorous description, especially when it had to do with death and killing, funerals and coloured people, were beyond description. I couldn't imagine how any dinner-party could be a success without this wonderful man. Since then I have seen him move people to tears as well as laughter, and in doing both he has the support of Mrs. Cobb, who, rare and loyal spouse that she is, can laugh and cry at stories that she knows by heart as easily as someone who has never heard them before. Perhaps that is because she never does know them by heart. Alone among story tellers Irvin Cobb has the gift of putting something new and better even into those that are his oldest and most frequently told. The element of surprise is always with him. He is without guile, jealousy or spite. He is as homogeneous as a schoolboy, and his laugh carries in it a quality of heart that heals antagonisms and brings good nature. If he were to be appointed the unofficial ambassador of all the quarrelling governments on the map of Europe

there would be a great chance for the brotherhood of man.

But the most unforgettable pleasure and privilege of them all was that of meeting the lady who afterwards did me the honour to become my wife. Being married to an author, who metaphorically disappears at odd moments into the fourth dimension, or when he is safely on earth, goes broody like a sitting hen, and, worse than all, has a hideous trick of saying, "Oh, just listen to this for a moment, will you?" and then proceeds to read three thousand hard-fought words at the most inappropriate moment, is no sinecure, as well I know. But she has borne it bravely, come through the ordeal with fine courage, and found her feet. I am now a distinguished person as the husband of my wife.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Running Amuck. Miami, Florida. "The Miracle of Love." London Again. Anæmic Intellectuals. War. Mental Snapshots. Lord Kitchener. The Anti-aircraft Corps. A Zeppelin Raid. White Feathers. A Near Call. Sandringham. The King and Queen.

I.

THERE comes a time in the life of every man who has been obliged to keep his nose permanently to the grindstone and stick to his last in the horrid fear of losing the hold that he has had the luck to acquire on a particular method of earning a living, when, in order to indulge in a mental adventure, an imaginative bust, he goes off at a deliberate tangent and creates something to please himself. Take the case, for instance, of that artist without whose pleasant but insipid pictures of goody-goody little darlings in perfectly spotless clothes swinging on a new gate under an excessively blooming chestnut tree, while a well-combed collie dog barks melodiously to see so much cherubic fun, no Academy could open and no suburban house warm into home. At the zenith of his career, at the very

moment when, in fact, he was as safe as a well-advertised tooth paste and able to pay his monthly bills by painting blindfold to a formula, he seized an opportunity, when his dear wife had gone to visit a somewhat newly married sister, to fling upon a canvas a long smouldering idea for the sheer joy of going, so to speak, on the loose. Amidst a riot of botanical beauty and delightful animal life he showed a most human and naturally lumpish Adam listening with growing interest to the eager account by a very nude Eve of a prophylactic lecture which had just been delivered by a grinning and impish serpent. It was exquisite in drawing, in colour and design. It was true not only of Adam and Eve but of every man and woman, and if it had been attributed to Giorgione, Titian, Carpaccio, or better still to Michael Angelo, Raphael or Andrea del Sarto and hung in the Palazzo Pitti, the floor in front of it would have been worn smooth by the feet of an endless stream of Carl Baedeker's swift-moving pilgrims who would have said, "Ah, how wonderful," before turning to the next double-starred item. Instead of which, as his shocked, tearful and sensible wife predicted, it was not only refused by the London Academy but the astounded hanging committee are said to have visited him in a body to see if he were sane. His publisher rushed breathless from the Haymarket and under

the stress of a frightfully mercenary upheaval handed him a revolver with which to blow out his brains. "If your public ever lays eyes on this . . . thing," he yelled, "the revolver won't be needed. You will be as dead as a squashed frog." It need hardly be said that the popular domestic painter who had brightened the drawing-room walls of so many suburban villas and honest family hotels hid his masterpiece behind a hanging in his studio and showed it only to the most loyal and secretive of his friends. But — he had had his burst, for once in his pot-boiling life he had spread his wings and flown.

And there is, of course, among a thousand other cases, that of the well-known novelist who had humbly subscribed for years to the tyrannical yard measure of his serial editors, conforming to their antediluvian ideas of what the public wants so that each of his innocuous stories was almost exactly like the other, the hard and fast pattern of them all beginning with love at first sight, going on through puerile misunderstandings which could have been settled with a word, and ending to the clanging of the marriage bells. Poor public! Wretched author! And one day, probably in spring, there came to this man the strange, wistful yearning of the artist, and he turned aside from the serial that he was about, with nausea, to begin,

played another and vastly different tune upon his typewriter and eventually flung a book quivering with truth and life-blood on the desk of his agent. He had run amuck. He had written something which the public not only wanted but would buy, — as it always will. He had proved conclusively, too, that that which was believed about him before he had fallen flat into the serial market was not a figure of speech. He *did* know how to write, he did, he did! How unspeakably the poor devil revelled in that breakdown! With what unutterable joy he broke away from handcuffs, wrote the best and truest that was in him and kicked the ancient and dreadful pattern to the winds. But when, with the sheepish air of a boy who had played truant, torn his trousers, gashed his hands, but filled his hungry soul with a brief freedom, he entered his agent's office to be spanked, spanked he most certainly was in words of unmistakable meaning. "As a serial, impossible. As a novel, magnificent. But if you lose your serial who's to pay your rent? — and if I allow this even to be seen by the editor he will give you up for lost." Like a whipped dog that man crept home with his opus, and making it a cushion upon which to sit, took off his coat once more, and, wearing a twisted smile, tapped off the old, old serial, like a suit of registered reach-me-downs, — and duly paid his

rent. Men must work and women must dress and poor old art goes moaning. But he, he too, had sat for unforgettable weeks on the highest summit of life. He, too, had supped with gods.

I need hardly say that all this ecstasy is not written here without a reason. It is merely to lead up to the pathetic confession that, during the summer of 1913 I sat in my cottage high up on the Chiltern Hills and wrote the sort of play that all my experience had taught me would never, never, be produced. Its title was "The Call of Youth." That, in itself, was bad, because neither leading men nor leading ladies care to be reminded of something that they have lost. The hero was far from being a hero, he was in fact a very human being; and the leading lady had a rival part in that of a headstrong and most attractive girl. Two appalling absurdities. Two long accepted reasons for its never getting within a mile of a stage. Then, too, I crowded the plot with characters, built up scenes that would have whirled most managers into bankruptcy and made an unhappy ending. Was I mad? Probably. It was the natural and inevitable reaction from a lengthy period of subjection to the reiterated statement of what the public wants. I had an awfully jolly time. I wrote all through nights of gorgeous silence, all through days of pouring rain, and when I emerged

from this air pocket, this strange oasis in a working life, I put the result of all these weeks of joy in a bottom drawer and locked it in. A year later, when I was home once more, Mrs. Charles Maude, who was going into management at the Criterion Theatre, asked me for a play. Not having one, I remembered "The Call of Youth", fished it out and sent it in for the joke of the thing. And here the story differs from those that I have told, because it was immediately accepted, paid for, and being cast when the war came upon us and it was at once withdrawn. Putting on a play seemed a futile business when the curtain had rung up on the first act of such a drama. And so it went back into its hiding place. It is still there in the sere and yellow, and from time to time I take it out and look it over and live over again in memory that brief adventure, that moral flight.

The summer over, I returned to America for another winter, which was far from uneventful and from which I was enabled to gain an insight into certain phases of human nature, very useful, perhaps, as copy, but far from pleasant to come up against. Miami, Florida, was younger then and still infested with real estate agents who did their best, in their shirt sleeves and with every type of inexpensive car, to realise their dream of making it, like Venice, a queen of the sea. I took a cot-

tage there from December until May, wrote and fished and bathed in unbelievably warm water and indulged in the reckless extravagance of hiring a yacht. This was called the *Buffalo*, and it behaved so exactly like a young and frisky specimen of the breed that on the way to Cuba we turned her nose round and put back to quiet waters; but not before the transparent Gulf Stream had delivered up many of her choicest fish. We dined with Colonel Thompson on the largest and most comfortable house-boat that I had ever seen, and with Mrs. George Gould on the private train which had her initials on the ceiling of all its rooms. Jean Schwartz was staying at the Royal Palm Hotel and with a startlingly sunburned face played some of the newest of his very catchy tunes. The tennis was good on a white-hot court and the golf amusing with its frequently raked sand greens. But it was not the thing to hunt in the jungle for the sliced ball because snakes had a nasty way of resenting strangers. An extremely painful dose of fish poisoning put one of my legs out of action for a time so that the novel that I was writing moved faster than it would have done otherwise. This bore the ultra-sentimental title of "The Miracle of Love" and in its result it was not unlike the curate's egg — good only in parts. I hated the thing when I waded through the proof sheets, al-

ways a job that brings with it a series of deep disappointments, but when, later, I saw it as it had been adapted to the screen, with all its faults magnified a hundredfold, it became almost amusing in its frightfulness. There is nothing so well calculated to take all the conceit out of an author as to see something that he has written turned into a moving-picture. The artlessness that is brought to bear, in most cases, upon these transplantations defies description, especially when a hardened scenarioist is given a free hand and the author is not consulted. And he is n't, ever. But there is a good day coming.

We were at home once more in June, to find London in its most happy-go-lucky mood, with the craze for dancing brought to the extreme limit of the grotesque, with an outbreak of night clubs in which unpetticoated flappers gave almost too realistic imitations of West African natives to a newly imported jazz, with Mr. Asquith rather nervously engaged in watching Lloyd George, Lord Haldane amusing himself by snipping off regiments from the British Army, Lloyd George laying new schemes to win votes when the time came for him to jump Mr. Asquith out, and all the rest of the old political gang contentedly drawing their pay and improving their golf over pleasant week-ends. The nasty echo of the little affair at Al-

geciras had died away very comfortably, and there might not have been a cloud as big as a man's hand over Europe. Dear old Germany was merely about to give its vast war machine a little annual oil by holding manoeuvres. That was all. How those naïve people did adore to play at soldiers and do the goose step and turn up their round bland faces towards their Zeppelins, and thrill, between frequent heavy meals, at the rumble of their artillery. After all, you know, every country, like every man, should have a hobby. Uniforms, and the discipline that went with them, was, indeed, a most admirable antidote to socialism, what? The anæmic intellectuals of the British Government, a body nearer perhaps to the zenith of perfection than any other in the world, with Mrs. Asquith cracking jokes, wore a supercilious and complacent smile. Lord Roberts had been shamed into silence. Poor old Maxse was, of course, still popping out of his weekly corner, in the guise of a bogey, to frighten children! Poor old Percy Scott, silly fellow, persisted in his idiotic talk about obsolete warships. Didn't everybody *know* they were obsolete and that the Navy was merely kept from the scrap heap in order to strengthen the physique of those of our dear boys who were unable to obtain enough exercise on shore? Then, too, it was rather nice for the First Lord of the Admiralty to enjoy a little

trip to sea from time to time without being out of pocket. The whole Cabinet indeed was happy, except Mr. Asquith, who had always felt just a leetle bit nervous about David. But the happiest man in London, by all odds, was Prince Lichnowsky, because he was able to send his messengers from the German Embassy to the German High Command to say, over and over again, that in the event of a regrettable rush of blood to the German financial and Junker head, quite unbelievable, Mr. Asquith's Government was far, far too intelligent to join in a brawl of any sort, though it would be perfectly willing to supply its friends with ammunition. There was, undoubtedly, a little awkwardness in Ireland which had all the appearance of leading up to civil war, and this gave the Cabinet and all political parties disagreements and antagonisms, but we had the Derby, Ascot, Henley in lovely weather, and, by the grace of God, Prince Louis of Battenberg with Winston Churchill and Sir John Jellicoe very hard at work and in close and constant touch with the War Office, so that when the long-prepared-for-and-eagerly-looked-forward-to Der Tag came at last, the British War Fleet was ready to bark and what remained of the British Army very ready to bite.

II.

On that first Sunday in August, 1914, I bicycled down the hill from my cottage on the Chilterns to the station at Princes Risborough, torn between feelings of awe and excitement. Already the town was alive with wild rumours of a naval battle and during the whole of that day aëroplanes, like lonely crows, flew intermittently towards London. The tiny village of Whiteleaf, up there under the White Cross, met and talked. Well, here it was. War, at last. After a period of the most ghastly and humiliating hesitancy on the part of the paralysed Government, during which Sir Edward Grey had had the golden opportunity, as the Crown Prince has written in his book, of calling a halt even at that eleventh hour by declaring that the whole strength of Great Britain and her Colonies was on the side of France, it was war. One man gave it a month. Another three months. No one knew why or how. Yet another said that he was off by the first train in the morning to get into something if they would have him, but that he was going to leave a revolver with his wife with instructions to keep the last round with which to blow out her brains when the Germans swarmed up the hill — his little hill in the heart of England. And so we all knew what *he* thought might happen at the end

of that month, or those three. And there was a silence that could have been cut with a knife.

A few stultified days during which morning, afternoon and evening papers were fetched from the trains. The grey wave breaking on Belgium; the Russian Steam Roller already beginning to move; French, appropriate name, in France; business as usual. Stories from mouth to mouth of the secret departure of English regiments, uncheered, unsung; of young Guards' officers sending messages to their friends to say "Goodbye; we shall never see you again"; of spies at work; of strange lights flashing in the night; of train loads of bearded Russians passing on the Great Western to London; of gallant men being turned away from the War Office while others, less mentally and physically fit, were ordering officers' uniforms; strange and horrible whispers; stranger predictions by an ever-gathering body of "our special experts", with maps; rushes to recruiting offices, and impotence; business as usual.

What on earth to do, and how to get it? Whom to go to, when to go there, whom to see? Those were the questions that tortured the fit and fairly fit, the young and the no longer young, the unmarried and the much married population of all England, who did not say, as one of the shopkeepers in Princes Risborough said, when asked

what his son was going into, "Nothing. Me and his mother have decided to remain neutral." Engineers and chemists were being put to clerks' work; clerks were being put to the work of engineers and chemists; ex-sailors were being enrolled into the Army, ex-soldiers were being sent to sea. Muddle, muddle, and chaos was the inevitable order of the day, but what remained of the British Army was living up to its glorious tradition in France and the British Navy was cleared for action.

My wife and I and our two small children, boy and girl, gave up the cottage on the hill, and went to London, and took a furnished house, — a tall, narrow, melancholy house in a long, narrow, melancholy street in Bayswater, filled with stuffed penguins, chilly photographs of Iceland, and white bearskins which had been collected by one of the officers of an expedition to the South Pole. It was the first that we could get, and I wanted to be "in" things like everybody else and on the end of the telephone for a call. And on the afternoon of digging up our roots and a first acquaintance with those stuffed reminders of the great White Silence, I heard of something and rushed for it, was enrolled in the Anti-aircraft Corps at the Admiralty as an able-bodied seaman and was ordered to report for night duty to the officer in charge of a searchlight mounted on the Arch at Hyde Park

Corner. The crews here were called the Duke of Wellington's Own, because, before the last night-watch, supper was served in his house a few doors away, which came in very handy. A new and fascinating bird's-eye view of London was to be had from the top of that nice old bit of masonry. The searchlight was a good one and already very efficiently worked. I had seen George Grossmith in that dusty room in the Admiralty and a host of other men I knew, — Sir Bootle Wilbraham, Wilson Taylor, Chiozza-Money, Sir George Newnes, — peers, bankers, doctors, dentists, artists, illustrators, architects, stockbrokers, sportsmen, gentlemen of independent means, none of whom were in the first or even second flush of giddy youth. Aircraft, — which, in face of all scepticism, was going to revolutionise warfare, work as the eyes of the artillery, make a laughing stock of the Channel and lay the most inland cities open to destruction. Anti-aircraft, a vital arm of defence, therefore, and although a new type of gun had still to be invented for the corps, here, at any rate, were the men, and good men too.

Snapshots of those early war months fill an album in my brain. All sorts of men, surmounting absurdities and humiliations by a sort of ecstasy, drilling in Hyde Park; no uniforms, no rifles; going through the rudiments of drill in back streets

from which they marched away, with their chins in the air, singing " Old yer 'and out, naughty boy." More men, partly in uniform and further forward, bayonetting fat sacks with the blood lust in their eyes, or being made physically fit, watched by children and their nurses, to become gunfodder by Swedish exercise; everywhere the old parade rasp of pukka N. C. O.'s back to the Army again; men singing, singing, but never a band. Kitchener, who refused to recognise in men anything but machinery, great soldier though he was of absolutely unsparing energy, putting a cold and heavy foot on imagination, — such imagination of the requirements of the human spirit at such a time as lifted France upon wings. Everything proceeding with the dull, unemotional, colourless commonplace of a public holiday in Scotland. What, for instance, could have been more deliberately and cruelly uninspiring than the arrival of the first contingent of Canadians who, instead of receiving a welcome from the old country which would have warmed their hearts and shown them England's sense of gratitude, which they doubted, were plumped down upon the damp lines of canvas on Salisbury Plain without a cheer and with too much money in their pockets. No wonder they broke loose and swarmed on London and worried the War Office into a perfect stew.

The secrecy that hung like a pall over everything never for an instant prevented the German spy from obtaining all the information that he needed. It merely succeeded in quenching ardour, creating a general feeling of disappointment, a sense of injury, a lack of confidence, and it gave a million tongues to rumour. Until the huge mistake was discovered everything was done drably and in the middle of the night.

The Anti-aircraft Corps received its first knowledge of the ugliness of air raids in Dunkirk, discovered the utter uselessness of rifles and was taken seriously in hand by Commander Murray Sueter and Lieutenant Pink, and two finer officers and better organisers could not possibly have been found. One after another gun and searchlight stations were built on the roofs of various buildings and taken over by officers and men who were becoming rapidly more and more efficient, — the officers commissioned to H. M. S. *President* of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, and attached, as the Corps was, to the Royal Naval Air Service, giving their whole time; the Chief Petty Officers and men every other night on light stations, every other day and night, in watches, on the guns. Prepared to give all my time and as much over as could be squeezed out, I was commissioned sub-lieutenant and attached to two stations on the Thames

above Westminster, and on one of these the smartest C. P. O. was a man who wrote very successful books for musical comedies and one of the most efficient A. B.'s a handsome actor whose photograph probably lay under the pillows of innumerable flappers. We worked there with blazing enthusiasm under the ironical handicap of a sickening aroma of jam.

To me, at any rate, it was an irksome and amazing thing suddenly to have to begin to learn lessons like a school-boy, with a brain completely out of the habit of such a process, and inelastic. In a great hurry we crowded in lectures on drill, signalling, electricity, gunnery — firing rounds at floating targets out at sea — and I confess that I frequently felt suicidal at my stolid dullness and inability to learn. Drill I had known backwards. It was only necessary to rub that up. I very quickly got the chance to do so by practising on the raw recruits of our mobile section in the courtyard of the Duke of Buccleuch's house in Whitehall Gardens — the only place not occupied by drilling men. I was then promoted to the charge of the four inner stations, two guns, two searchlights, with three and sometimes four officers and somewhere about three hundred men, and it was the whole and sole ambition of every man Jack of us to achieve and preserve the last inch of efficiency

and smartness; the stations running as though they were gun-boats; discipline and etiquette naval — and one cannot say more than that. The longer and harder we drilled on the guns and lights, watch by watch, day in, day out, fathered always by a naval rating of long years' service who lived on the stations and generally kept canaries, hung out washing and played poker like the Heathen Chinee, the more keen we were that every alarm should develop into action so that we might prove our metal. Every night we had evening quarters, when unloaded guns were drilled on imaginary Zeppelins that were picked up and held by all converging searchlights, to which London and its surroundings very soon grew callous; especially when Mr. Balfour, sitting in the Admiralty in September, 1915, issued a statement to the effect that people might sleep peacefully in their beds. He could not have touched wood when he made that confident and epoch-making remark because the following night every gun from the East Coast to the heart of London opened fire on a Zeppelin which dropped bombs as she sailed along in perfect comfort, and there was a red blaze behind St. Paul's Cathedral by which one could almost see to read. I shall never forget the thrill of the moment when we picked up that long silver fish with the white star searchlights and let fly at her.

But long before that hopefully expected night, which found us ready, but with guns of too short range, the comic side of things cropped out in many places. There was, for instance, an epidemic of recruiting posters all over England, grossly comic and humiliating, devised by people without the smallest knowledge of British temperament and spirit, and those awful women whose contribution to war-work consisted merely in the presentation of white feathers to men who seemed to them to look like slackers. No one will ever know or care what were the feelings of the one who handed a snow-white quill from the fantail of a pigeon to a man in mufti in the Savoy Hotel, received his courteous thanks and was told that that was the third decoration with which he had been honoured that day, the other two having been pinned on his chest by the King. I never had the luck to win a feather, but one morning in the Tube, when after several nights of alarms, I was going, heavy-eyed from want of sleep, to my tailor's in civilian clothes to try on a new uniform, one of them spoke to me. She was placed on the opposite seat between a very fat man and two pretty girls. A large, hard-bosomed woman, with imitation cherries dangling from her hat, she eyed me vindictively for many moments, waited until the train drew into a station and said, not knowing me

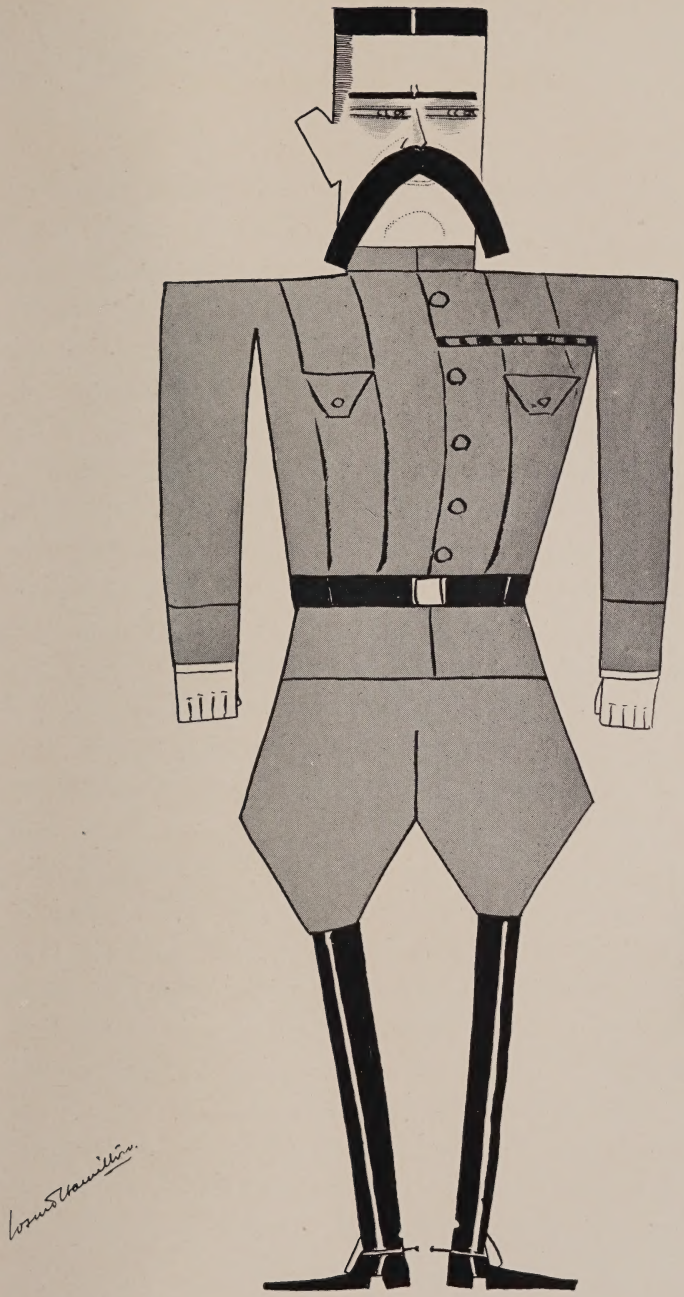
from Adam, "I am surprised not to see you in uniform." "And I'm surprised not to see you in underclothes," I replied for want of a better answer; but the sight that she, overplump soul, obviously would have made in such garments in such a place was too much for the people who had heard these idiotic remarks. The two girls uttered screams of derisive laughter and the fat man nearly fell under the seat.

And one afternoon I had orders to report at the Admiralty, urgent; and did so, nippily, with child-like thoughts of promotion, and found what looked to me like a court martial in process, and was finally dealt with by a very angry old sea dog who demanded to know what the devil I meant by writing a disgraceful attack on the President of a neutral country from whom we were receiving great assistance in money and ammunition, — an article which had appeared in a London evening paper and had subsequently burnt up the cables. I was dumbfounded, aghast. Yes, I had written it, to keep my pen oiled before the outbreak of war — a mere piece of light satire — but I had never intended that it should appear in print, nor had I authorised its publication by an agent in whose hands I had left everything that I had written before retiring from the game. "Then how do you explain the fact that here it is, having given all the

greater offence because your name appears as Lieutenant R. N. A. S.?" I couldn't, but I asked for an hour in which to make a defence, dashed off in a taxi to the office of the newspaper and brought back a sub-editor who would swear that the article was not sent in by me, and that he himself had added those words to my name in order to "make it more interesting." All the way back I pumped into this pale person a horrid picture of a man with a wife and two children standing in front of a firing party with his back to a wall. He told his story, was ordered to get out, got out like a rabbit, and I was left under the cold blue eyes of that fine old sea dog. I then listened to an unprintable lecture on the iniquities of all you writing men, was informed that I had saved my skin by the fraction of an inch, commanded to put my . . . pen away for the period of the war, and ordered back to duty. I took a deep breath, saluted, turned about, and achieved the door. "Come here." I went there. What next? There was a different expression on that weather-beaten face. Was it a smile? "A damned good bit of writing," he said. "I enjoyed it very much."

It was an altogether new, refreshing and astonishing experience for me during all that time to find myself without the necessity of thinking out plots, worrying about dates of delivery, discussing ideas

with editors, managers and publishers — transplanted as suddenly and completely into another life as the overworked Mr. Barnstable, in Wells's "Men Like Gods." Not that these gun stations of ours seemed to me remotely to resemble Utopia, with the responsibility they entailed of protecting an unrecognisably darkened London but with an unmistakable winding line of river, and the long, long days and nights of routine, the irregular meals, the broken sleep, the constant waiting for the alarm, the anxious hope of longer range guns. And when I paced up and down in the small hours, having seen the midnight watch on board, it was curious to find how quickly a mind which hitherto had run so closely in one groove was now in another diametrically opposite. The old sea dog need not have warned me to discard my pen, drink my ink and eat my paper. I never gave a thought to any of them. My new job held me completely. I might have been born into it. Nothing seemed to have mattered until I took it on. And it was the same with other men — all of them, I think, whatever had been their work before the war; even those, younger and fitter than the members of the A. A. C., who were in the thick of it, doing the real work, sitting in familiar juxtaposition with death.



LORD KITCHENER.
As they thought of him in France.

III.

It was in January, 1915, that I received orders to make a list of picked men to leave at once on a mysterious expedition with searchlights mounted on motor trucks, under the command of Lieutenant Pink — Pink by name and in the pink of condition and efficiency, a born leader of men, a typical Naval officer and a gentleman. I was to go as second officer. In field kit and with as little gear as possible, we entrained almost before we knew it at Euston, for a place, near the East Coast, of which I had never heard, with sealed orders which were not to be opened until a certain moment after our arrival there. Drawn up in the courtyard of a small, smart country station we first heard the steady marching of infantry and then the heavy rumble of artillery wagons. A detachment of the Grenadier Guards hove in sight under the command of Colonel Gilbert Claud Hamilton, hardly recovered from a nasty dose of shrapnel, with Lord Stanley and young Eaton, and then two R. A. guns and their crews in charge of two officers, one of them so Scotch that I could hardly understand a word that he said. What on earth did it mean? If the Germans intended to make a landing somewhere near, and Kitchener had got wind of the fact, how could so small a body of men and arms push them off again? We asked ourselves a dozen

equally fantastic questions, read the orders at the appointed time, found that we were to mount guns and searchlights round the King's cottage at Sandringham — and functioned, quick.

It appeared that the King and Queen, after many months of ceaseless and unsparing work and deep anxiety, had felt the need of a short holiday, and had slipped away, unparagraphed, to the charming house with its wonderful racing stables of which King Edward had been so fond, but which was, by an unfortunate coincidence, within a comparatively few miles of the point on the coast that was aimed for by the Zeppelins. It was very certain that although England knew nothing of the fact that the King had retired to this place to shoot his birds and obtain a brief respite from his arduous duties, Germany did. In fact bombs had already been dropped on nearby fields, and Kitchener had another worry to add to his daily pile. It got about among us that he had said we were "to sit on the King's head in case of a buzz." This was probably a very free and colloquial adaptation of his orders to try to persuade the King to keep well under cover in the event of a raid, which we all knew was easier said than done. As a fine shot, a born sailor, and a man who eagerly and gladly would have given ten years of his life to be in the thick of fighting, the King, we knew jolly well,

inevitably would be with us if there were to be a buzz, acting in all probability as gun-layer, and having an excellent time.

Colonel Hamilton took charge, and with a map of the place in front of him, and Pink at his elbow, very quickly allotted the positions for the guns and searchlights which were to be connected by telephone. He and his officers and Pink were to be billeted in the guests' quarters of the Cottage, I in the Vicar's house, the Artillery officers in other houses, the Grenadier Guards and our men in comfortable places. And then we set to work and had everything ready before it was dark. I need hardly say that we all felt under a heavy load of responsibility and saw nothing romantic in the fact that this was the first time in the history of England when a King and Queen were to be protected in time of war from an enemy attack by air-ships — the most uncanny and diabolical of all attacks at that. Neither is it necessary to say that, like everybody else in the country, we held the King and Queen in deep personal affection and respect and that the mere thought of their being in danger filled us with an indescribable sense of anxiety and anger. It is difficult, perhaps, for people who belong to democracies and republics and are under the wholly mistaken impression that Kings are ciphers and figureheads of out-of-date constitutions to under-

stand the sentiment with which we of England regard our Royal Family. It is, however, true to say, and never was the truth of it more definitely proved than in that time of war, that King George and Queen Mary are not the heads of an aloof family living behind the high railings of a palace, but the heads of every family in the country, that they belong personally to every household, are essential to our well-being, and are deeply and truly loved. We are, in short, a democracy that maintains a monarch because we need him rather than a democracy that is obliged to put up with a dozen monarchs because they cannot be shaken off.

Hamilton and Pink dined with the King and Queen that night, with whom were Princess Mary and Prince Albert, with Sir Charles Cust, the Hon. Sidney Greville and Lady Eva Dugdale in waiting, and I was left in charge. The night slipped by peacefully, but for one most amusing incident. It must have been about ten o'clock when a sergeant-major of the Grenadiers loomed out of the darkness, waggled his hand in the inimitable Guards' salute and informed me that the Park was filled with "frank tirrers", armed with rifles. If they loosed off suddenly, there might be a nasty mess, so what did I think he ought to do about it? It took me a moment or two in which to grasp the

fact that he meant *franc tireurs*, and then I ordered him to bring up a file of men and lead me to one of these people in order that we might discover who they were and what was their reason for being out. We stalked our game warily through a rather heavy mist and came suddenly face to face with an elderly and distinguished gentleman, with a large moustache, prowling about in an overcoat and carrying a double-barrelled sporting gun. When I snapped out a request to know what on earth he was playing at he burst into an indignant flow of words. He wasn't "playing" at all, Sir. In grim earnest and imbued with the most loyal feelings he was out, Sir, by God, to protect the King, and who was to prevent him he would like to know! I would, I said, and I asked him if he had ever heard of the stupidity of hiring a dog and barking himself. He had, but let there be as many dogs to bark as there were spots on the sun no one was going to prevent him from doing his duty by the King, who was a life-long friend. This was awkward, especially as it dawned upon me that he was only one of an organised party of equally loyal but mistaken men, including, probably, the peace-loving but sporting Vicar, butlers, footmen, gardeners and the like, ready to shoot at any long thin cloud which their imaginations turned into a Zeppelin. There might be shots in reply from young

and high-strung sentries and the nasty mess to which the sergeant-major had referred. I didn't argue. Life-long friend as he was, and his emotion proved it — he had been, in fact, the King's schoolmaster — I simply said that if he didn't immediately deliver up his weapon and go home I would put him under arrest and tie him to a gun carriage to cool his ardour. And this he did, but not before a tall slim figure walked into us who, turning out to be the Vicar, was concealing a rifle beneath his overcoat. Eventually the two gallant gentlemen retired together, only half satisfied that our small protecting force was well able to do what was required without their assistance. I was then wholly unaware of the eavesdropping presence of two or three maids from the Cottage who had memorised every word of this brief encounter from behind the nearby bushes.

The sequel was equally awkward and amusing. When, next night, I was commanded to dine at the Cottage and had the honour of taking the Queen in to dinner, duly prompted by Sir Charles Cust on certain points of etiquette, I found that the story had got about and there was something a little sheepish in the expression of the footmen. With the arrival of the fish and carefully choosing her moment, the Queen, greatly amused at the whole affair, asked me to tell my version of the story,

which I did as I have told it here. There was so much laughter at our end of the table that the King asked if he could share the joke, and desiring to spare the blushes of the servants the Queen said, "Presently, George." Later, when the Queen, whose blue eyes had danced all through dinner, went into the drawing room to knit socks for soldiers, I repeated the story to the King, and he was as much touched, I thought, as amused. The other guest that evening was the Scotchman, but being overcome by nervousness he never opened his mouth, and so it devolved upon me to earn our dinner. That was easy enough because the King told many most interesting anecdotes, especially of his visit to Canada as Prince of Wales and his experiences on an American warship, of which he had a vivid remembrance.

There never was a buzz, much to our relief. The days were occupied with drill, an inspection by the King, a visit to the racing stables, Sunday-morning church, during which the Vicar never referred to barking dogs as I thought he might, having an excellent chance, a long chilly motor ride to the coast to inspect and report upon a deadly looking unexploded bomb which lay in a potting shed at the officers' quarters of a regiment of Coast Artillery, having been very tenderly dug out of a field into which it had been dropped be-

fore our arrival; long talks with the Queen and Princess Mary when they came to sit on our gun platforms; and a game of golf between the Army and the Navy with clubs collected from the Cottage, during which Pink swung himself off his feet into an artificial lake, and the Queen sat down in the mud with laughter. The nights, cold and raw and luckily misty, were spent in watching, ears tuned to catch the humming of an airship, and sometimes quickly distended by the distant and not unsimilar sound of a motor-cycle. The Vicar, and his mother, gave afternoon tea to our crews, picked men indeed, and finally the whole force lined the road, stuck caps on bayonets and cheered when the King and Queen left Sandringham to return to London, to carry on.

When the Queen asked me to write an account of that unique episode, of which three copies should be printed, I was tempted to do so, with Pink's illustrations. He wielded a remarkable pen. But when I came to think how it could be done I found it as difficult to write as I now find this, because there were so many intimate, charming and personal things to which no possible justice could be done in words of mine, things that the King said that were not meant to be repeated, — his emotion at the casualty lists, his great pride in the courage and endurance of his men, by whom he was affec-

tionately called G. Five, his intense desire to be on active service at the front — he was on active service enough as it was — and his great kindness to us individually. I could have written freely, of course, of the delightful relationship between the King and Queen and their son and daughter, but that had nothing to do with the point. And so the account was never written and I can do no more than touch it briefly here.

CHAPTER NINE

Back to America. Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson. Mrs. Patrick Campbell. Leslie Stuart. Rudolph Valentino. Major General Leonard Wood. "The Sins of the Children." "Florabella." John Drew. British Secret Service. "Scandal." America Goes In. The Prince of Wales. Lord Beatty. Lord Reading.

I.

To enable me to return to America on important business I was placed on the honorary list of the R. N. V. R. in October, 1915, when I sailed on the S. S. *New York* with my wife and family. The children were well, but my wife was in very bad health, so that I was extremely anxious about her. Night and day work had had their effects upon me, and I was far from happy as an incipient victim to a wretched illness that was presently diagnosed as colitis. Although a great many gallant Americans had joined the British and French forces at that time America herself had not yet made up her mind to throw in her weight with the Allies, and so the S. S. *New York*, showing her name in great electric letters on both her sides, hoped to pass through the danger zone without

being plugged by a torpedo from a callous submarine. This she did, though not without many nervous hours and numerous boat drills which gave the more imaginative of the passengers a series of undesirable thrills. It was with an indescribable sense of relief that we eventually passed beyond prowling distance of the U-boats which already had made a great harvest of Allied vessels and shocked the world by sinking the *Lusitania*.

In addition to Mrs. P. G. Wodehouse, who was going over to join the invincible "Plum", then busily at work upon that pleasant series of intimate musical plays, the first of which was built at the instigation of Lawrence Grossmith, and Mrs. Albert Sterner, the wife of the portrait painter whose draughtsmanship and colour approach more nearly to the high standards of the old masters, I think, than those of any of his contemporaries, Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson was on board with the members of his company, among whom were Laura Cowie and Ian Robertson, with the Dante face. He was returning to America for another tour with Jerome's vastly successful play, "The Passing of the Third Floor Back", and to revive several Shakespearean productions, among which his "Hamlet" stood out like a good deed in a naughty world.

I never had had the opportunity of knowing

Forbes-Robertson very well in the flesh. One of the most ardent of his admirers during his seasons with the temperamental Mrs. Patrick Campbell at the Lyceum Theatre, I had met him in the casual atmosphere of clubs, brief and unwished-for visits to his dressing-room, and during the rather hectic periods of the rehearsals of "The Light That Failed" and other plays. His talented brothers, Ian and Norman, I had known much better. But the long monotonous days of an Atlantic crossing, like those when men are thrown together in a camp, provide the most admirable chances of intimacy, — too admirable in some cases, and inescapable always. I took the full advantage that was afforded by this voyage to know Forbes-Robertson the man. I found him astonishingly without the naïve egotism, bred of a mixture of grease paint and adulation, that goes to the heads of so many leading actors. He might, in fact, never have been on the stage in his life. He never began a single sentence with "When I was playing Hamlet", or once wrung in what Walkley said of "My Othello." But for his wonderful voice, the perfection of his diction, and the ascetic profile which made him stand out among the ruck of men, he might have been an Oxford don about to see a little of the world, a Harley Street surgeon on the way to a convention, or the Solicitor-General on a

voyage for his health. In spite of every effort to live down to his surroundings he failed to disguise the fact that he was a man of intellectual parts. He had a most sensitive humanitarianism, a charming way with children, a ready laugh which alternated with moments of profound seriousness, an artistic eye for colour and sky effects, and the most endearing gift of being vitally interested in almost everything that was said to him. His gentle, delicate, fastidious nature had been hurt and horrified by the war and its cruel manglings, but whenever he spoke of it, as, of course, he did frequently, he would blaze into passionate anger and indignation and wish to God that he were young enough to fight. Constitutionally a dreamer and an artist, he was without the most rudimentary business sense and it was easy to imagine, because his feet never seemed quite to be on earth, that he would be capable of going on a stage to play "Hamlet" that was set with the scenery of a Winter Garden review, and from sheer force of personality "get away with it." There never was a man who, it seemed to me, so greatly stood in need of being managed, guided, tended, mothered, valeted and nursed. If no one tucked the steamer rug round him in his chair, he would go cold, forgetting both that he was on a ship and that the wind was sharp, and if the steward neglected to bring the dinner

that he had ordered, it was in him to talk through the time usually devoted to the performance of eating and leave the saloon completely satisfied. He had a way, too, in the middle of a vivid conversation, of appearing to turn round a corner of his thoughts wrapped in the consideration of a completely different subject. It was amusing to watch him start off before dinner with the grim intention of walking ten times round the deck and find him listening, in wide-eyed concentration, a few minutes later, to the earnest prattle of a little girl. A simple, humble, charming and most cultivated man, with a delicious sense of humour, a passionate idealism and the heart of a boy.

The mention of Mrs. Patrick Campbell stirs many memories in my mind of a courageous, complex, extraordinarily gifted woman, who was, and is still, I suppose, in spite of her recent volume of self-exposure, a rather mysterious person to the playgoing public. I met her first when, several years after she had amazed London with her brilliant performance of Mrs. Tanqueray in the play which finally dispelled the fog of early Victorianism that had hung about the English stage, she was running the Royalty Theatre with a company which, at different times, included George Arliss, Gerald du Maurier, Granville Barker, Fred Kerr, Beryl Faber, Winifred Fraser, Albert Gran, and

William Fernandez. The latter's acting in the part of the old father in "Magda" was a masterpiece, while that of Albert Gran as the young Prussian officer seemed to embody the spirit of the whole German army. In addition to the production of this play, which drew all London to the somewhat unsavory purlieus of Soho, Mrs. Campbell revived several of Pinero's plays with great success, introduced Max Beerbohm and Frank Harris as playwrights, and gave theatregoers their first sight of "Les Romanesques." Under her management the Royalty was the most interesting and vital theatre in London, and the rehearsals of the various plays were conducted by her with a tireless energy and a passion for long hours and small details which frequently undermined the constitutions of the members of her company, her secretary, her maid and the little bald dog which was her inseparable companion — an uncanny and curious animal of which I cannot speak with much affection because, one night during a drive to her mistress's charming house in Kensington Square, she amused herself by biting a pattern of chunks out of my overcoat. I arrived in that peaceful and delightful Square, a stone's throw from the house in which Thackeray used to live, bearing a close resemblance to the tramp bicyclist of the music halls.

It was in this house, which, I believe, had been decorated and arranged by the pre-Raphaelite Burne-Jones, and which was the Mecca of the higher Bohemianism, that Mrs. Patrick Campbell shone at her best. Here, at the inimitable supper parties over which she ruled almost every night, at the head of a long narrow table with the alarming Pinky-winky sitting near her plate, she threw off those witty and biting impromptus which were immediately fathered by the licensed jesters of the London clubs. Discarding the conventional attire of the modern women and the enormous hat for which she had so great a fondness, Mrs. Campbell always appeared on these occasions in a one-piece melancholy robe which might have come from the dressing room of Dante's Beatrice, and with a face most pluckily devoid of make-up and her abundant hair in Rossetti disarray hurried through supper in order to enjoy a green cigar in the rigid discomfort of an Italian chair. It was no wonder that she was surrounded by men of, for the most part, keen intelligence and great achievements who, like Bernard Shaw, admired her beauty and nimble-mindedness, restless ambition, daring tongue, devotion to her children and amazing courage under what must often have seemed to be insuperable difficulties. It was no wonder either that many of them rallied to her side when illness

bowled her over at the zenith of her extraordinary career, and that Shaw, especially, with the most exquisite loyalty and kindness, refreshed the weary monotony of a long convalescence with that burst of make-believe love letters which were printed in her book. Mrs. Campbell deserved friendship. As an actress she had, and has, great gifts — an unusual and fascinating voice, an originality and independence that made her work unique, a peculiar sense of rhythm that is so essential to the proper interpretation of a well-written play, and an instinct for the theatre which, however greatly it unsettled the hard and fast ideas of stage directors, carried her audiences with her and gave distinction to everything she touched. As a woman, very human, and more than a little difficult at times; very inquisitive, mischievous and alert; gleeful at other people's discomfiture, and with the peculiar sense of humour that enabled her to crack a joke about her own; indefatigable in the theatre, with the gift of being worshipped by a convoy of favorites; loyal to her friends and generous with her money, with an insuperable impatience with the ugly and the dull.

We had an argument, one morning, I remember, about the work of Burne-Jones, and when for the fun of raising her dander I said that I could not understand why he delighted in painting freak

women in fields of limp daisies she led me to a picture of his that hung in the drawing-room and demanded to know if "that beautiful creature is a freak"? I didn't think that she was beautiful. I thought that she far too closely resembled an anæmic spinster who had wandered into a perfectly private garden before breakfast in her nightgown to get a foot bath in the dew. And as frankness was the order of the day I said so, won a scoffing laugh, and pointed to her feet, which luckily for me had six toes apiece. Thereafter I stuck to the word "freak", with triumph.

Neutral as America was at the time of which I was writing when the sudden remembrance of Mrs. Campbell drove me off at a tangent, many of her people were far from being neutral and were using up almost as much wool and sympathy in the making of socks and sweaters for French and British soldiers as the women of those two countries were, and I found on every side an eagerness to get into the fight which not only carried hosts of fine fellows to Plattsburg, there to obtain an intensive training in the arts of war, but up to Canada to enroll in the Expeditionary Force. All that was wanted then, as later, to bring into a great flame an underlying fire of deep feeling was the lighted match of a Governmental edict. Already there were many brave nurses in the Allied hospitals

who wore their uniforms over good American hearts. And so the propaganda that I undertook immediately was sown in very fertile earth.

II.

But there was one man in New York whom I was delighted to meet there shortly after my arrival who seemed to me to be as unconscious of the war as though he were living on a South Sea Island with a piano in his bungalow. This was Leslie Stuart, the composer of hundreds of famous songs and, among many other light operas, of "Floradora", "Havana", and "The Belle of Mayfair", of which I wrote one act, if you remember, while Charlie Brookfield wrote the other. Several years before the war I had spent a few days with Leslie Stuart at his delightful house on the Thames at Cookham, and had mapped out in elaborate detail the plot of a play to be called "The Little Governess" in which we were to collaborate — his music, my book. It never was written, and, therefore, never produced by us, owing to many disturbances in the shape of immediate work, but subsequently the scenario fell into the hands of an energetic person who, probably disliking anything in the nature of waste, founded a very successful musical comedy upon our story and saved us the trouble of writing it. It was really rather gratify-

ing to see how deeply the troubles of the little governess had affected him and with what fidelity he had carried out our pretty tale. I found Leslie Stuart comfortably ensconced in a studio in the middle West Forties, knee deep in new and mellifluous numbers and the fag ends of a thousand cigarettes. And there, in the pleasant intervals of business, I drew together the unknotted ends of a formerly discussed story which, in due time, became a play called "Nina", in composing the music of which Stuart outdid himself. In addition to the fact that he had never grown up and was an Irish-Liverpudlian, Stuart was a man of strange impulses and odd complexities, difficult therefore to deal with, though a lovable, loyal, and most attractive creature, fair of hair and blue of eye, who came up smiling even after he had been knocked completely through the ropes. His resilience and capacity for work were quite remarkable, and when any other man who had never stirred from a seat at a piano for twenty-four hours would have fallen face down on the bed, Stuart had an astonishing way of turning a lineless and cherubic face to his interruptor, lighting one more cigarette, and playing over all the neat pages of the score that he had written with the fresh enthusiasm of a well-slept man. A homogeneous person who was happiest when surrounded by young people who

loved music and could sing, his studio very quickly became the collecting-place of innumerable aspirants for parts in the gradually erected musical play on which he was at work. Among these, many of whom have since had the satisfaction of seeing their names in electric lights, was a quiet, eager, fur-overcoated young man who wanted to sing but had no voice, wanted to act but was without experience, and finally wanted to dance, which he did extremely well. Day after day he hung about the studio, more and more wistful, more and more eager, more and more inarticulate, but never any less glossy of hair or furred of overcoat. What happened to him when he disappeared after realizing that a Caruso voice does not come to men by wishing, or an English accent by eating cold roast beef, I haven't the faintest idea. The next time I saw him was when, no longer in a fur-lined overcoat, he played the hero in "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" and made the name of Rudolph Valentino turn the heart of every woman over twelve and under sixty-five.

A contract had been made for the production of "Nina" with one of the large producing companies on the strength of the story, and Leslie Stuart's name, before a line either of the book or the music had been committed to paper, so that it went into rehearsal as soon as it was ready with an admi-

rable company, the leading parts in the hands of Wilda Bennett, John Rutherford, Joseph Latora and Barnett Parker. I directed the book in the many strange places that are invariably allotted to rehearsing companies, basements, smoking-rooms and the like, and Leslie Stuart and his conductor coached the chorus in his music. Great enthusiasm prevailed and optimism grew stronger daily as the story emerged and the melodies took a greater hold. I shall never forget attending a music rehearsal one night in the vast cellars of the Forty-fourth Street Theatre which were called the Little Club, and being swept off my feet by the lilt of those numbers, the thrill of Stuart's masterly finales, orchestrated for fifty voices and all the instruments of a full band. Just at the moment when all that we needed to proceed to a production were the scenery and the clothes, in walked a stage director of the old barn-storming bully type attended by a play-doctor who, from force both of habit and of custom, is sent in to inject a million microbes collected from the old, old book of jokes into the veins of supposedly frail pieces. Not being able to understand that this appearance was simply part of theatrical routine, the outcome of the usual pessimistic report on the book and the company, we gazed at them with great amazement and a rising temperature, but proceeded with the

rehearsal in the endeavour to forget. In the afternoon, however, the blood went to our heads when the barn-stormer stalked over to the piano, gazed over the shoulder of the conductor at the orchestrated score in front of him and called out: "Cut everything out except the top-line. Rehearsal dismissed until this evening. Eight sharp." This meant that with one devastating sweep of an ignorant blue pencil all Leslie Stuart's harmonies were to be swept away as valueless, leaving the unorchestrated melody to the voices and the band. A bomb dropped into the middle of an art gallery, destroying all the precious exhibits and leaving merely the bare walls of the building, was precisely the effect of this absurd and emasculating order upon the many months of labour that had resulted in this score.

Well, waiting until this hectoring housebreaker had removed himself from the staggered stage, I then proceeded to collect every scrap of the music, every page of the book, and all the actors' parts, and with this huge bundle Stuart and I, feeling rather like Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, walked out never to return. When the hectoring gentleman "who knew his business" put in an appearance at eight sharp he found a blank piano, an even blanker company, no book to cut to ribbons, and no score to emasculate. "Nina" was dead,

as dead as a doornail, but the poor little soul was buried with full honours in the studio with all her limbs intact. Every member of the company attended the funeral, deeply sympathetic for all that they had wasted several good weeks of their time and energies, and Leslie Stuart sat down in order to recover his breath. I regret to say that he never succeeded in doing so. He hung about New York for a considerable time waiting for someone to tread on the tail of his coat, while he wrote enough delightful music to fill half a dozen new light operas, and then went back to London, carrying the embalmed "Nina" very tenderly in a trunk.

Because this event, this cold-blooded murder, has long ago fallen into the limbo of forgotten things there does not seem now to be any use in commenting upon the methods which led up to it. The affairs of the stage in New York have, I think, improved greatly since 1916, and there are, so far as I can see, fewer barn-stormers employed. They have been swallowed up, perhaps, by the moving-pictures. Be that as it may, I am inclined to believe that the touching story of the death of "Nina" is not likely to be repeated, and if that is really so then she will not have gone to an untimely grave in vain.

I have made a brief mention elsewhere of having had the privilege of meeting Major General Leon-

ard Wood, whose headquarters were on Governor's Island at this time. We spoke on the same platform at the Harvard Club, at lunch one day at the Cornell Club, and I had several long talks with him. His was an important position then, and one which was, it appeared to me, extremely delicate and difficult from the fact that he disagreed, so far as I could gather, with the policy of President Wilson in keeping America out of the war. I got the impression, rightly or wrongly, that if he had had any voice in the matter, he would, like Colonel Roosevelt, have gone in with the Allies if not at the very beginning of the war then certainly later, after the sinking of the *Lusitania*. There is no doubt whatever that if this view had been accepted the fighting forces would have been spared many months of carnage, the countries involved many of the frightful troubles which have followed them into peace, and the world generally the disturbing influences which have undermined the very roots of pre-war civilization. Like everyone else who came in contact with General Wood I greatly admired his soundness, honesty and fearlessness. And when he stood up to speak to a body of the kind of men who understood him and whom he understood there was something about his simplicity and directness, his slightly abrupt manner and total avoidance of eloquence and

rhetoric that reminded me of Lord Roberts. He had the absolute sincerity and deep feeling that were Bobs's too, and would rather have been shot in his boots than make a theatrical gesture. "Although too much a soldier among sovereigns no one could claim with better right to be a sovereign among soldiers."

About this time I was invited by the Colonel and officers of the Veteran Corps of Artillery of New York, who had their eyes on the inevitable developments of the future, to consult with them on their plans for the constitution of an Aircraft Defence Corps. It was their belief as well as mine that as soon as America placed her great resources of men, money and munitions on the side of the Allies with which to bring the war to an end, the possibility of the arrival of U-boats designed to carry seaplanes was very far from being as fantastic as it was often said to be. And when one of them shortly after paid a sensational visit to America, having crossed the Atlantic with the greatest ease, thus proving the correctness of our contention, plans, and most excellent plans, were drawn up for coast defense, and the Veteran Corps opened its ranks to a large body of recruits who immediately set about making themselves efficient under the command of Colonel Delafield. It was an inspiring sight to see the clubmen of New York

learning their drill on every possible occasion in the armory opposite the Vanderbilt Hotel, and I was very proud to think that I had even so infinitesimal a part in the initial formation of what eventually became a splendid regiment.

I had very little leisure for writing then because I was on my feet at one meeting after another speaking on the spirit of the war. It was, I suppose, very obvious propaganda and I confess that I was at no great pains to disguise my purpose. With America "in" the end must loom in sight. Nevertheless the butcher, the baker and the candlestick-maker have an uncomfortable knack of requiring the payment of their bills and the only method known to me of performing that difficult feat was with a pen, a pad, and a bottle of ink. And so at all sorts of odd moments and strange places I managed to complete a novel called "The Sins of the Children" and the libretto of a musical play, with the help of Miss Dorothy Donnelly, called "Florabella." It was not a good novel. It creaked at the hinges, was too mechanical in its construction, and suffered from spasmodic concentration. But I rather liked the play, although the critics were not altogether in agreement with me in that. The lyrics by Percy Waxman were excellent, as is everything that he writes, the music by a foreign composer was melodious

with the inevitable Austrian dramatic waltz, the acting of Madame Abarbanelle, Lawrence Grossmith and young Purcell was quite delightful, and the story, which, after all, matters a good deal, *was* a story, with a not unoriginal twist. I can say this without the natural egotism of all men because it was n't mine but another fellow's, which I merely adapted and to which Miss Donnelly added a good deal of excellent fun. Although the play was not what is known on Broadway as "a knockout", it had a fair success at the Casino Theatre and elsewhere. Its producer was, however, a man with, at the time, an incorrigible disinclination to pay royalties, and this made for a certain amount of unpleasantness and put my busy agents to considerable inconvenience.

We rented a very cheerful and roomy farmhouse at Easthampton for the summer of 1916, and here there was good golf, good bathing and good company. Victor Mapes was there wearing the laurels that were deservedly his as part author of "The Boomerang", an unusually successful comedy then running at the Belasco Theatre with Wallace Eddinger, Arthur Byron and Martha Hedman in the leading parts. There also were the brilliant and ebullient lawyer John Bouvier, whose flow of several languages rivalled, if it did not exceed, the impetuous rush of Niagara Falls;

Philip Ruxton, a man with the gift of friendship and an open house, and Augustus Thomas, who found time to leave his pen to lend the weight of his calm and easy eloquence to support the candidacy of Mr. Hughes for the presidency of the United States. But the dominating figure of this most charming resort was John Drew, the Squire of Easthampton and the gardenia of the American stage, who lived then, as he does now, and, I hope, will long continue to do, in a house filled with as many interesting and delightful things as is his mind and conversation. The head of an extraordinarily talented family among whom are numbered Ethel, Lionel and John Barrymore, and the husband of a sweet little lady who had endeared herself to playgoers as to everybody else, John Drew was enjoying a well-earned holiday with the characteristic gusto of one who knew how to make the most of every day. The last of the dandies, he strolled down to the bathing place every morning in appropriate morning clothes, having, perhaps, changed from the last word in riding kit in which he had intended to go for a gallop but had never gone, or the proper thing for tennis in which he had forgotten to arrive at the courts. In a bathing costume which made every other man's look shabby, he greeted his friends with Grandisonian manners and Chesterfieldian badinage on the way

to take a dip in the inevitable surf, and later indulged in a sun bath in the altogether which was just as smart and debonair as the wet two-pieces that were lying on the boards. Golf in the afternoon in the *dernier cri* of Harris tweeds or Irish homespun and well-boned shoes with flopping tongues — three or four holes or so with many jokes — before changing again into the Monte Carlo garments necessary to Le Five O'Clock which might, or might not, come out of a teapot. In the evening the waisted dinner-jacket, the butterfly tie, the D'Orsay waistcoat, the polished shoes, and finally, something in the way of pyjamas, silk dressing gown and Russian slippers which would be enough to turn Brummell himself the deepest shade of green.

Always "dressed for the part" of a gentleman in daily life, John Drew never had to act the rôle for which he had been cast. He had only to be himself as nature made him, with a courtesy so true, a kindness, a charm and a hospitality so real that he stood out as the very epitome of that infrequent term. Widely read, and with a retentive memory, it was his pleasant and amusing habit to swing the conversation round his way so that he might drop in a tag of Greek, an epigram in Latin, or a neat play upon words in Molière French, and he never let a chance go where he might point a moral

and adorn a tale with an apt quotation from the poets. And yet it had begun to be necessary for him then to commence to memorize the lines of a new part several months before rehearsals started, and on these he worked with the patient aid of his wife or his daughter, like Shakespeare's schoolboy, with shining morning face, resorting to a hundred dodges to escape his lessons. His recent work in "The Circle" as a crochety old man showed him to be just as perfect a comedian as when, in the heyday of his wonderful career, he played in the Empire Theatre under the banner of Charles Frohman. Great days, those!

III.

If it was a long and tiring journey from Easthampton to New York, it was longer and more tiring if the return were made the same day. I was obliged to undergo this strain many times during my so-called holiday, and being an impatient traveller, bored beyond expression at having to sit still, I made use of those hours on the train by writing the outlines of stories that I might develop at a future time. Owing to the fact that Sir William Wiseman and Colonel Norman Thwaites, who were running the British Secret Service, had conceived the admirable notion of diverting attention from themselves to me, I was followed every-

where those days by German agents. They watched my apartment, all my goings and comings, and probably tried to tap my telephone. I have no doubt that among my numerous audiences there was certainly one person, at least, who became very sick of the sound of my voice. It was on one of these journeys, however, that I mapped out a story which turned out eventually to be something in the nature of a god-send to the all too numerous tradesmen whose bills never fail to make their appearance with the regularity of clockwork upon the breakfast table of a married man. I dictated this, which I called "Scandal", that winter, to the widow of a clergyman who was acting as my secretary, an elderly and most efficient lady who came to me through snow and ice with the flaming persistence of Excelsior. She took it down in shorthand while I walked up and down my room in the old-fashioned apartment house called the Osborne in West Fifty-seventh Street, which was not then, as it has become now, the Rue de Rivoli of New York. Almost the first building of its kind to be erected in the city, the Osborne had been conceived with an eye to space and elbow-room, designed with the laudable and generous idea of permitting its tenants to swing a cat if they chose to indulge in that particular form of cruelty. It had high ceilings and wide halls,

bathrooms in which it was possible to skip for the sake of preserving the waist line, and walls thick enough to allow a man to sneeze without the fear of rattling the bric-a-brac in the neighbours' cases. In all these respects it was the antithesis of the recently thrown up apartment houses in which the family skied up on the twenty-second floor with barely room to turn can hear the intimate domestic details of the daily life of the ones above, on each side and far below without straining an inquisitive ear. From my window I obtained an oblique view of Carnegie Hall, that amazing beehive in and out of which, it seemed to me, an endless crowd of people poured incessantly. Because of many necessary interruptions of often several days at a stretch it took a considerable time to finish this book which was then serialised in the *Red Book Magazine*, editored at the time by Ray Long, a man who has the happy knack of winning the friendship and affection of his authors. No sooner was the story completed and I had gone broody again than my invaluable secretary fell ill and died. This was a great grief to me, and a matter of all the deeper regret because I was afraid that my story was the cause of her untimely death. She had been perfectly uncomplaining under it, wonderfully and beautifully plucky, but there had been moments when her mid-Victorian

spine had stiffened and a look of fright had flitted across her charming face. And so for a year or so I was secretary-less for two good reasons. One, because I did not believe that I should have the luck to find another so quiet or so dogged; two, because I was afraid to face the possibility of causing a similar tragedy. But it was then that I put a new and interesting experiment to the test. I intended to try to make a play of "Scandal", which seemed to lend itself rather well to dramatic treatment, and I knew that it had become the recent habit of theatre managers to demand half, if they were not able to obtain the whole, of the motion-picture rights of every play acquired. I was then, as I am now, completely out of sympathy with this bad habit because it did not appear to me to be part of the duty of a dramatist to turn himself into an insurance office upon which a manager might make a claim in case of a play's failure. If he were to have half the picture rights, I argued, why not half the book rights and all the royalties until the play had earned all the money spent on its production? Also I had told myself, and others who had disagreed with me, — it is curious how many people there are who will always disagree — that a play would have a far greater chance of interesting a wide public who had seen, but not heard, its story on the screen than if it came to them un-

known and unheralded and mostly unadvertised like a swallow perching insecurely on a telegraph wire. I went out deliberately, therefore, and sold the picture rights of the novel, — or rather my agent went out on my behalf. *I* should only have been sold. In course of time the picture, with Constance Talmadge admirable in the leading part, made its appearance, accompanied with more large bills upon the boardings than are devoted to a hundred plays. And then I dramatised the novel, and as there were no picture rights to go with the play what was the use of asking for them? I found a manager who wept bitter tears as he bowed to the inevitable, and after the usual little troubles at rehearsal, of which I have written already, it opened in Chicago, not like a swallow on a wire, not like an unknown child lost in a great crowd, but having been made well known by the picture, which was, even then, as a matter of fact, on view in most of the picture houses in the city. I had arranged for that. The experiment succeeded because the picture was sufficiently good to make the people who had seen it anxious to listen to what the characters had to say in the play, and the consequence was that so large a crowd presented itself at the theatre to see the first performance that the man who had put on the play, but did not possess the faintest idea of the

value of the thing that he had got, gazed about him in amazement and assured his equally astonished press-agent that those people could not possibly have been there if they had not been under the positive impression that they had come to witness the representation of a successful piece which had been transferred that morning to another theatre.

When it became known that the Government of the United States was about to declare war against Germany there were people who so entirely misread the psychology of their countrymen that they believed there would be protesting riots in the streets and shootings from windows. Warnings to this effect were telephoned about New York, I remember, much to my surprise. It had become very clear to me, having observed the trend of feeling all over the country, that America was intensely anxious to play her part, that she had grown restless and angry in being kept aloof and that her one supreme desire was, as a Harvard man put it to me, to "get in, get over and get through." The pro-Germanism of the average German-American was, of course, a perfectly natural thing. And as for the Irish-American he was, generally speaking, all against flinging off neutrality not because of a lack of keenness to fight — he could never be accused of that — but because he detested

the idea of having, in the most remote degree, to lend assistance to the British. Then there was the Jewish population as to whom there was a feeling of uncertainty — though without the smallest reason, because they rose superbly to the occasion in every possible way. But when the epoch-making day arrived at last and the great decision was made known to America and the world, — and, oh my God, the sense of hope and confidence that presidential message gave — the melting pot became a nation in the twinkling of an eye and rallied to the star-spangled banner in a spirit that was indescribably inspiring. I shall never forget the electrical thrill that ran over the country at that wonderful moment, or the thankfulness that found immediate expression in an outburst of Allied flags and feverish effort. For myself I confess that it was impossible to walk along Fifth Avenue the morning after the declaration of war without a constant choking, or later to watch the overwhelming success of the draft board, and the quick creation of great camps, the blazing ecstasy of men and women, the white heat of enthusiasm with which the first Liberty Loan was put through, the superb concentration of the whole country to make up for lost time, without the deepest emotion. One said to oneself over and over again, "America is in, America is in." And every man in every Allied

uniform and every mother of all those men echoed that cry with renewed hope and confidence.

I cannot begin to describe, although I saw it, the growth and shaping and final departure of the great army and navy that was dedicated by America to the cause of civilisation, or the drives — and that was a good word — in aid of the Red Cross, the Y. M. C. A., the Salvation Army and the Liberty Loans that made men give until it hurt. I was in these to a humble extent, working daily, here, there, and everywhere, among an army of civilians, ex-soldiers and tireless women, and can speak, from personal experience, of the inexhaustible generosity, taxed to the breaking point over and over again, of every individual American of every creed and whatever his antecedents. Huge sums were raised. Men emptied not only their pockets but their bank accounts, and when it came to the final Liberty Loan they mortgaged their houses and sold the jewels they had given to their wives.

Among the hundreds of vivid pictures of those days that line the gallery of one's mind there are, of course, several favourites. One of these shows the young, eager and crusader faces of a large contingent of the A. E. F. drawn up on one of the drill grounds of Governor's Island a few days before embarking for the great adventure. From a high

wooden platform with a strong wind in my teeth it was my difficult job to make a short speech to them on the spirit of the war — which they knew as well as I did and were bound to know much better. I felt like that puerile and insignificant man in one of the drawings in *Punch* who, as a member of an enormous gathering in an indigestible dream, had committed some social *faux pas* and found himself in the searchlight of one great enquiring eye. Men and officers stood rigid and, but for the fine dignity that was upon them all, expressionless. Moved by the gravity of the occasion, and the knowledge that a large percentage of those gallant youths might never come back, I began with serious words. Quickly sensing, however, that they had had as many serious words as they could stand, I then swung into the relation of several of those amazing stories of grim humour which had come out of the war — Queen Mary and the much tattooed man, for instance; the capture of a bespectacled German by two lanky Australians who finally confessed to having "pinched him from the blinkin' British" — and waited for the laugh. At the end of the first of these the laugh never came. There was a universal twinkle in the ranks and a quick flash of teeth. No more. The officers had not laughed. But at the end of the second the generals behind me and the officers below gave way

and then a wave of laughter rose up from all those men that was blown across the Island. The one about Lord Curzon, who, after having been driven towards the front lines by a slip of a girl in uniform, was told sharply to "nip in" to the car when a shell burst too nearby for comfort, drew himself up indignantly and said that he was accustomed to be addressed as "My Lord" and got "And I am accustomed to being called 'My Lady', but nip in all the same," did the trick again, after which everything was easy.

Another. A large meeting under the auspices of the Third Liberty Loan not a hundred miles from New York. An invalided officer of the Allied forces having got as far in a speech of unbelievable indiscretion as to have stirred an eager audience into indignation and dismay. My sudden rising, my elbow hard in his wind, his astonished collapse, my statement that the gallant officer had been severely gassed and was under the effects of another attack, a quick crack of laughter, and the return journey to New York in appalling loneliness with the invalided officer at the far end of the smoking carriage!

And, among others, the figure of Mr. Balfour, standing in a box in Carnegie Hall, tall, round-shouldered, gentle, charming and apparently as cool as a cucumber, speaking mellifluous sentences

while his hand waggled with nervousness behind his back. The one, too, of a Colonel attached to the British Military Mission who, having answered a telephone call from headquarters, continued to dictate a letter until he came to Yours Faithfully, then looked round at the Major and said, "Oh, by the way, the Armistice has been declared, but don't let that interfere with the work of the office."

The Armistice . . . ! And after those two wild outbursts of joy and relief, the second rather in the nature of an anti-climax, the gradually returning regiments, the gold stars, the wounded, the shell-shocked, the departure of President Wilson to the Peace Conference, and business as usual? Hardly. That is, indeed, another story.

I do not suppose that the Prince of Wales will ever forget his visit to New York and his wonderful welcome, the crowds that surged round his car, the cheers that answered his smile, the banquets, the entertainments, the hospitality, the enthusiasm, the friendships. The night that he went to the Metropolitan Opera House with Lord Grey and General Pershing, afterwards giving the slip to his party from the *Resolute* which lay in the river off Riverside Drive, to sing songs round a piano among a number of young Americans as lively and high-spirited as himself, is a good one to remember. That huge opera house was filled from

floor to ceiling. There was n't even the fraction of an inch of standing-room. Suddenly at the end of the first half of the programme the word went round of the Prince's arrival, and with all lights up and with everyone standing to face his box he came into view not in the well-known naval uniform with the cap at a characteristic angle of forty-five, but in mufti like the rest of us — and a very expert tie. But what won all hearts and called forth volleys of welcome was not so much his great good looks, his fair hair, and eyes as blue as those of his mother, his slim athletic figure, and his splendid record in the war, as his charming diffidence and a boyish nervousness that made him finger his tie and smooth the back of his head and break the gravity of his expression with his winning smile. And afterwards the little fight that he put up not to sit in the rather pompous chair in the middle of the box but to put Lord Grey in it, which he won. With the lowering of the lights after the playing of the National Anthem there came a sympathetic laugh above the music when the first thing that he did was to sweep the house with glasses in a quest for pretty and familiar faces. And when he called upon some friends in another box in the interval and had to wriggle through a thick crowd in order to return to his own, his body guard scattered, he shot his hand up

with Alma Mater warmth when an ex-rowing man of Oxford yelled out "Give her ten." Lord Claud Hamilton and Lord Louis Mountbatten and the rest of his party on the *Resolute* were afforded few hours for sleep during that brief and wonderful visit.

There was great enthusiasm, too, when considerably later Lord Beatty came to New York on his way to Washington to attend the navy-scrapping conference, and the fact that his better half was American added to the friendly feeling. He also was nervous under multitudinous eyes, especially, I thought, at the banquet given to him in the ballroom of the Pennsylvania Hotel where he spoke under the necessity of saying as little as possible, always a difficult feat to perform. He would probably have tied himself into a series of sailor's knots if he had not taken the precaution to bring the pages of his speech with him; which he read in a ringing voice, the Brummell of the Navy. The biggest thrill that he gave to his enormous audience that evening was by his peculiar pronunciation of a word that he brought in several times. He made it "reckonise" and each time the missing "g" caused a hiatus of surprise. This affair came rather at the fag end of banquets and at a time when the blood pressure of America had become normal once again. I remember very well the

dinner that was given at the Plaza Hotel to Lord Reading, on his retirement from Washington as British Ambassador, because the emotion of the evening was more than a little jarred by the incessant sound of fox trots in a too close dancing room. Although Lord Reading spoke well in his suave and silky manner, looking little less handsome than when, in the piping times of peace, he was wont to stand as Rufus Isaacs, K. C., before the judges of the Law Courts in wig and gown, or attend first nights in London with his playwright brother-in-law, Alfred Sutro, who bricked up the Garrick Theatre in long ago days with "The Walls of Jericho", it must have been a little difficult for him to keep to the grave rhythm of his farewell speech when the rival lilt of "The Babes in the Woods" and "How yer gonner keep 'em down on the farm after they've seen Paree", kept breaking in.

Much water and a gradually diminishing number of barges have gone under the bridges since then.

CHAPTER TEN

Motion-pictures. The Coast. Rex Ingram. Raymond Blathwayt and Harry de Windt. The Famous Players. William C. de Mille. Cecil de Mille. Will Rogers. The Old and the New Technique. Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford. Charlie Chaplin. "The Rustle of Silk." "The Silver Fox." Lady Astor. William R. Hearst. Colonel House. Josef Hofmann.

I.

WHEN, as far back as 1908 or so, it was realised that the motion-picture had captured the fancy of the great public, to whom it brought a fascinating glimpse of unknown places and amazing doings, even if the medium was then disconcertingly covered with a rash of spots and accompanied with the rise and fall of an uneasy horizon, innumerable companies sprang up like mushrooms to take advantage of a long-felt want. Provided with money, energy, business astuteness and an ineradicable belief in the protoplasmic condition of the average brain, the greater number of these hastily formed corporations rushed into this new and remunerative market with utter puerility and the glorification of trash. I never shall forget the opening, by

a local butcher, of a disused barn in the High Street of my medieval village, of the first picture show that ever had been seen there, paying fourpence for the privilege of standing at the back of an excited audience of children and farm hands, in an atmosphere that it would have been easy to cut with a knife, and watching the earliest efforts of competing American companies by whom life was represented to be either a series of exaggerated accidents with love and virtue triumphant at the end, or a conglomeration of insanity and practical joking indulged in by elephantine comedians, cross-eyed tragedians and blonde young women in bathing clothes. The first rough pictures of actual happenings were driven from the white sheet very quickly by a torrent of such things, with the inevitable result that the dreams of the children of this and every other village and town became filled with crashing trains, falls from high cliffs, glossy villains stalking innocent working girls, cow-boys firing revolvers in crowded bars, horses that always galloped, mothers who were very, very old, spouts of water, flying pie-crust, burning houses, comic feet, and strings of running people colliding with police.

The pioneers of the motion-picture were not consumed with an overwhelming ambition to rise on stepping stones to higher things. They had

entered the new industry mainly from the cloak-and-suit trade, the vaudeville stage, the pantomime and the circus ring. They gave the best that was in them, made money and were satisfied. There were very few photographers among them, still fewer artists, and the whole of their education could have been put with comfort on a plate. And so, avoiding stepping stones because they seemed to be quite unnecessary, the motion-picture producers continued on their easy and unimproving way until that fine day when Cecil de Mille, the playwright, disgruntled with the theatre, went into a Broadway restaurant to smoke a cigar with Jesse Lasky, and being asked "How about the Pictures?" went to see one there and then. Out of the smoke of that cigar grew the Famous Players' Lasky Corporation with its city of studios at Hollywood, and, imitation being the sincerest, though one of the most disconcerting, forms of flattery, a dozen other corporations, all of which plunged into the making of better moving-pictures under the praiseworthy persuasion that it was for them to raise these things out of the gutter and place them among the Arts. David Griffiths stalked into the business, too, followed by such men of high intelligence and keen ambition as, among others, William de Mille, Allan Dwan, Ernst Lubitsch, Maurice Turnour, Rex Ingram

and James Cruze, and, if any proofs are still needed to the pessimist and unbeliever to establish the fact that, in spite of numerous mistakes, bewilderments and failures, the moving-picture can, with a fine story, a highly intelligent scenario and good direction, be placed among the arts, it is only necessary to point to "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" and "The Covered Wagon." These two recent pictures, and especially the latter, with its inspiring story, its beauty and simplicity of treatment, and a truthfulness that makes it difficult to believe that it was not taken of an actual occurrence, lost, found after many years, and shown, are so superlatively good that they have done much to wipe out the bad marks on the moving-picture slate.

My own knowledge of moving-pictures, like that of other authors until the last few years, until I went to the Coast, was limited to infrequent visits to London and New York Palaces, and the pain of seeing the complete distortion of several of my novels in their adaptation to the screen. With one or two notable exceptions it is only right to say that what the pictures made out of my various efforts have given me more excruciating agony than all the dentistry that I have ever suffered from. Bought presumably because they appealed to the picture eye of the men who were to direct

them, I confess that I never could understand why it was impossible to recognize them in the pictures that came out of the machine. As now, it seemed to me then to be an amazing waste of money to buy a novel for something that was in it and then not only deliberately to leave it out but to lay upon my shoulders the responsibility in the eyes of all who saw, if they were able to see, my name upon the picture of all sorts of stuff that I was incapable of imagining. I thought, and I still think, that the cause of these misrepresentations and failures to grasp the value, if any, of the purchased books, lay in the fact that they were not allowed to be scenarioised by the author himself, or a competent person, but were put into the hands of machine-made scenarioists with far too retentive memories of motion-picture hokum who read no more than the titles of the books that were entrusted to their far from tender mercies. And it was the sight of one of these scenarios in which I failed to see the most remote resemblance to the story I had written that caused me to pack a bag, book a cubby-hole on a train belonging to the Santa Fé railway system and go on a voyage of discovery and rescue to the seat of trouble.

It was an interesting, amusing and valuable experience. It was also an expensive one because, detesting the enforced inertia of long railway jour-

neys and their necessary insalubrity, I paid a heavy price in boredom and irritation. It was a pleasant change to land finally in Los Angeles, that large and flourishing harbour of retired Middle Westerners who, after a hard and bitter struggle, have been drawn there by the subtle and magnetic mixture of mañana and sunshine. Driving at once to the hotel in which a room had been reserved for me, I found that not only was it occupied from basement to garret, with many curious spaces in between, but that an impatient waiting list which overflowed the foyer was rendered all the more crowded by the presence, as it seemed to me, of a dozen Fatty Arbuckles. If a naturally petulant clerk had not promised that he would find me a pillow for my head by eight o'clock, I should have tried my luck immediately at another hotel. As it was I waited until nine o'clock and then, patience being exhausted, I delivered an ultimatum at the office in the nearest approach to printable language of which I was then capable. I don't know why, unless it was that he liked my shoes, but a kind and breezy man who had overheard my brief harangue, and the reiterated regret that every inch was full, came forward and offered to place his show room at my disposal, in which a bed could be placed with perfect ease. The clerk and I jumped at the offer together, with the result that

I passed a peaceful but somewhat odorous night between long trestle tables covered completely with samples of boots and shoes — new ones, unmated, of every conceivable type. In the morning, breakfasting early, I joined Coningsby Dawson, who was about to leave for another town on his lecture tour, accepted his key with joy and possessed myself of a comfortable room. It would be a picturesque inaccuracy to say that the Ambassador Hotel was full, at that time, of the would-be movie stars from the four quarters of the globe, although undoubtedly many of them were there of all sexes and all ages. It would, however, be quite true to say that the Hollywood Hotel, to which I transferred myself as quickly as possible, was inhabited largely by such people, among whom were many Mertons, and a number of ex-officers of the British forces, waiting wistfully for a job. Why they should have laboured under the pathetic impression that it was easier to make a fortune in the movies without any experience than in any other work under the same handicap I cannot say. The fact remained that there they were, in shoals, living on hope for the most part, and, as it appeared to me, quite unsuited physically to oust either Thomas Meighan or Wallace Reid from their steady places in the movie firmament. Living in this hotel were H. B. Warner, his wife and the most

wonderful infant the world had ever seen, and a young director, glad to work on whatever he could get, not yet fully recovered from injuries sustained as an officer in the R. F. C., who took me up to see his brilliant and ironical drawings in a room vibrating with his dreams. Rex Ingram was his name, an Irishman and a sculptor. And among those who came there most frequently to lunch and dine and talk were Raymond Blathwayt and Harry de Windt. These two were sharing a typical Hollywood doll's house in a road of similar dolls' houses, the former acting in a picture during the intervals of writing a second volume of his reminiscences to be called "The Tapestry of Life", the latter looking perpetually as though he were on his way to the Marlborough Club after having passed the time of day with a friend at Boodles', working on a scheme. An explorer both by instinct and by practice, de Windt was endeavouring, I gathered, to float a company in order to build a Ritz Carlton at Tiawana, where there should be a second Monte Carlo for those whose hobby is roulette and baccarat. A charming idea. I had not met Raymond Blathwayt since the second year of the war, when he lectured in the London house of a philanthropic Peer on the younger generation, or the Grandisonian Harry de Windt since the day when, with Everard Heneage, I had seen him off to

cross the desert of Sahara without companionship. Time had dealt kindly by them both.

In New York I had heard, of course, many references to "The Coast" in those moving-picture circles which are perfectly square, and I had visualized it as a most bewildered and chaotic place, built somewhat casually on sand dunes to which all the world sent stories to hear of them no more. It was, therefore, with great astonishment and interest that I discovered that expression to mean a long, wide and well-laid street almost wholly composed of cafeterias and apartment houses, completely surrounded by villas which sat in each other's pockets from the foothills to the sea, among which, in various spacious corners, minor cities of smart and well-built studios throbbed with activity. Gargantuan geranium trees grew opulently on the sidewalks among semi-tropical brothers and sisters whose long arms provided all but salamanders with grateful shade, and as every one of its inhabitants had forgotten how to walk the paths were deserted and the roads were full. There were, in fact, more cars of every vintage to the square inch of this place than even in New York in the busiest time of the day.

The first of my thrills came when, while lunching in one of the uncountable cafeterias, I rubbed shoulders with Charlie Chaplin in his world-known

makeup and sat in close juxtaposition to Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford, Gloria Swanson, Elliot Dexter, Will Rogers, William Hart, Wallace Reid, Thomas Meighan and hosts of others who had made themselves of greater importance to the peoples of the earth than kings and presidents, prime ministers and politicians, bishops and judges, and those who came between. It took me some time to recover from the uneasy feeling of having intruded into a scene that was in the making, and every moment I expected to hear the click of the machine.

The second of my thrills was caused by my first visit to the Famous Players Lasky Studios and there to find not the bewilderment and chaos that I had expected but a vast and efficient institution running with the calm deliberation of a military hospital, Kellogg's Sanitarium and Oxford University rolled into one.

In the long line of low buildings that faced the street were housed, with great comfort and many individual ideas of interior decoration, the managers, directors, architects, art-advisers, editors, financial experts, advertising experts, scenario writers, secretaries, stenographers and an army of clerks. In these, also, were the large pens in which were herded together daily the ever growing number of would-be picture actors, who came from

every conceivable country and every walk of life. Young, no longer young, not quite old and old, nearly all of them were there, I suppose, because they laboured under the wholly erroneous impression that Hollywood was the mecca of easy money, and that nothing else was required to make them famous in the pictures than the desire to become so. The disillusion and the heartbreak that finally must be theirs!

Taken to what was much more like the library in a country house than any man's idea of a mere office, I was given a warm but sceptical welcome by William C. de Mille. It was for him that the scenario of my novel had been made and he was the director who had to be persuaded not only that it was wrong but precisely in what manner I considered that the book was to be treated in order to inspire his confidence and enthusiasm and so to become a picture. I found him an earnest, high-minded, intellectual man, one who had written several successful plays, a lover of music and children, of poker and fishing, tennis and poetry, who, without the slightest pose, regarded pictures not as a mechanical process for the delectation of an easily satisfied public but as an art to be approached with humility and reverence, the new art giving a greater scope to imagination and to beauty, the delineation of character and of incident

than it was possible to achieve in any other medium. I liked him immediately. I liked his Florentine face, ironic humour, and pride in his job. I liked the fact that he reeked of tobacco and regarded me openly as a mere mortal who had been permitted almost by a miracle to make an entrance into Mars. I was, I believe, the first English author ever to pass those sacred portals for the purpose of collaborating with a director in the making of a picture, — and the fact that this unprecedented departure from a golden rule was not wholly a failure was proved when the password was given soon after to Gilbert Parker, Elinor Glyn, Edward Knoblock and Somerset Maugham. It was already in the possession of two American dramatists, Salisbury Field and James Forbes, and both were in the studios when I arrived. Field, related by marriage to Robert Louis Stevenson, had been watching Cecil de Mille's methods for several weeks and, beyond being deeply impressed by the intense concentration, elaborate and painstaking attention to every detail which had been displayed by this director, was not quite sure whether he was on his head or his heels. As for James Forbes he declared himself, with his usual honesty, to have been left as cold as ice by all the talk that he had heard of "the new technique" which made it necessary to tear

a play or a novel to pieces and patch it up with the old, old movie stuff in its adaptation to the screen.

I had lunch with Cecil de Mille in a sort of G. H. Q. hut well behind the firing-line, and afterwards was commanded to his presence in an office filled with antique furniture and skins, — an enormous and imposing room which seemed to me to wear the look of a "set" put up to represent the living-room in the hunting-box of the King of Ruritania. I found him to be a strong, dynamic, enthusiastic and somewhat dogmatic man, who had flung himself heart, soul and body into the making of pictures, and who permitted nothing to stand in the way of his large conceptions. Money, nature and mankind were mere ciphers in his scheme of picture expression. He was the Northcliffe of the Coast, the Mussolini of the screen. And among the other directors and officials of those immensely well-organised studios, in which there was an inspiring loyalty to the cause, I met William Desmond Taylor, the mysterious murder of whom, sometime later, threw Hollywood into a panic and the Famous Players into grief. He was a charming, capable and cultivated man, as I found when I worked with him in the most friendly manner on a story which eventually became a picture called "The Curse of Wealth", the original title having

been "The Almighty Dollar" and a better one, I thought.

II.

The suggestion that I should spend a week or two in the studios before returning to give William de Mille my ideas as to how my novel should be dealt with, which was the whole object of my visit, was, of course, a good one. I was a tyro in the game. Studios were new and strange to me. And so I wandered with peculiar interest about that huge place with a lofty glass roof like that of the Crystal Palace, out of which the good Californian sun was kept, much to my surprise, by canvas screens, the pictures being taken by artificial lights that stabbed the eyeballs. Whoever it was who called the motion-picture the silent drama can never have been near a studio. As I stood in the one in which Cecil de Mille was working, hour after hour and day after day, in the endeavor to photograph a little boy in the act of catching a frightened goldfish in a large glass bowl, to the inspiration of a wailing violin, a prize fight was going on before a howling mob to my right, a shrill maiden was being noisily assaulted to my left, and a body of cowboys was shooting up a bar to the complete indifference of Will Rogers behind me. The conglomeration of sounds was overpowering and indescribable, and underneath it all, always, per-

sistently, there crept the muted sweetness of that nerveless violin.

Attached to every studio was a little army of workers: the director either crouching on the floor in riding breeches and a gaping shirt, or buried in a canvas chair on which his name was stamped; the camera men and their assistants, all of whom bore a close resemblance to the rough riders of a maurauding force; men with searchlights perched on the tops of ladders; and made-up actors hanging about in listless attitudes. Everywhere long snake-like cables attached to blinding lights. Elliot Dexter and Gloria Swanson were the stars in the picture upon which Cecil de Mille was concentrating all his remarkable energies, and during the whole process of the goldfish incident Dexter, wearing evening clothes and a make-up which made him look as though he were suffering from a serious attack of jaundice, killed time not only without the slightest show of impatience but with the unbroken placidity of an Indian sentinel. He neither read nor smoked, talked nor walked. He showed no interest in the many happenings about him and was as little affected by the mixture of noises that echoed through the building as a telephone operator in a woman's club. He was content to sit and stare with infinite satisfaction into space upon which he probably saw in gleaming

letters the amount of salary that he was drawing every week.

I watched the beautiful Gloria Swanson at work one day, and was bewildered, mystified, though deeply moved when, with tears streaming down her face and sobs shaking her shoulders, she made her way step by step across an unrecognisable room to no one, beseeching him, so far as I could understand, to forgive, forget and for the sake of the child who was n't there, begin whatever it was all over again. It seemed to me to be all the more remarkable a histrionic effort when I was told that Miss Swanson knew probably just as little about the story of which she was the heroine, as the hero, the child, the goldfish and the uninitiated onlookers.

When Will Rogers was not acting in front of the camera he spent his time characteristically in the open spaces of the studio, throwing the lariat and chewing the inevitable gum, while, with the benign smile that is so well known to the audiences of the Follies, he shot off a series of deliciously impertinent comments on the affairs of the world to an admiring circle of temporarily unoccupied "atmosphere", as is his wont upon the stage. A delightful, naïve and unconceited man, Will Rogers, who will never recover from his surprise and amazement at having been able to put over his rope

twisting chats upon a sophisticated audience. An earnest, forthright man, too, with the sort of Lincolnian honesty and simplicity that wins respect.

Of Jesse Lasky, the brains and the tactful spirit behind this bee-hive of clashing temperaments, I saw very little. But of pictures, made, and in the making, I certainly saw more during the first weeks of my novitiate than ever before in my life. I dined with the directors of rival studios, and met many stars, dozens of scenario writers, designers and decorators, and other members of that large army of men and women, who are in and behind the pictures that go out of Hollywood to all parts of the earth, and it is true to say that, in spite of its reputation as a somewhat hectic place, I found Hollywood orderly and self-respecting, eager and earnest, hardworking and devoted to its trade. A little dull, perhaps.

Finally, knowing, at any rate, what I did not like in the motion-picture and all the things, including the disconcerting and ugly close-ups, motor cars, cabarets, country clubs, lions, Roman arenas, burning houses, and the like, which it seemed to me had been used enough, I retired to the solitude of my hotel bedroom and wrote for several days. The result was a scenario of "His Friend and His Wife", not written with the new technique of which I had heard so much and knew so little, but

the old technique of playwriting, the concentration of interest on the fewest number of people, the elimination of everything that cluttered up the exposition of the main line of story, the accumulation of incident on a rising scale. And in order to do this I had cut out every character in the book except five and limited the scene of action to the houses of the two husbands and the fishing cottage of one. Also, having noticed that it seemed to be the habit to take people out of pictures as soon as they came on, I deliberately reversed the practice and brought them on to stay. I then proceeded with considerable nervousness to read this thing to the sceptical William de Mille, who, to my extreme delight, liked it, accepted it, and shortly afterwards made it, adding many admirable touches of his own. The picture was so well directed by him and so well interpreted by his company that under the title of "Midsummer Madness" it had a great success.

In addition to the pleasure and interest provided by this visit into the heart of moviedom I brought away the firm conviction that the weak spot in the making of moving-pictures is to be found in the scenario. My observation went to show that the most vital and important part of this business was in the hands of those who knew too little about stories and too much about pictures.

The story's the thing in the movies, just as the plot's the thing on the stage, and therefore I could not see why the system was adhered to of entrusting first of all the judgment, and then the scenario writing of a story, to people who were insufficiently trained, or who, having received the necessary training, fell victim immediately to the epidemic of writing down instead of up to the public. It is this chronic and deep-seated disbelief in the public's intelligence and imagination which, still existing, makes a gaping hole in the middle of most of the studios down which are thrown the greater number of the good stories that are sent to the coast, and causes the illiterate twisting, emasculation or debauchery of so many of the remainder that find their way into pictures. There are, of course, many exceptions to be made in this sweeping assertion, otherwise we should not have had "Robin Hood", "Down to the Sea in Ships", "The Four Horsemen", "The Covered Wagon", "When Knighthood Was in Flower", "Rosita", that delightful picture in which George Arliss played the part of a tired business man to whom enforced leisure was a nuisance, and several others whose names I can't remember. It is my opinion, nevertheless, that the story cannot be brought up to the high level of direction, photography and lighting as it prevails now until the reading and sce-

nario departments of the great producing companies are entrusted to well-trained editors and to writers who have won their spurs. In every case, too, I think that the author should be consulted and made of use, because, after all, oddly enough, he is the father of the story, the baker who makes the loaf.

I had met Douglas Fairbanks in 1913 when, as a young actor, he crossed on the *Olympic* for a holiday in England, and was almost the only man in Piccadilly to wear a top hat and tail coat. It was good to find that his remarkable and well-deserved success had left him with a head that was perfectly normal in size, and a sense of humour as fresh as it had ever been. He had developed into an athlete as well as an artist since those pre-war days, and bore the reminders of all his pictures in scars upon his body. Sane, shrewd, energetic, high-spirited, kind and thoughtful, he had no illusions as to the permanent loyalty of picture fans or any comfortable and mistaken belief in the retention of his enormous popularity that allowed him to slacken in his efforts to make his next picture better than his last. The little leisure that he allowed himself was spent in playing games for the hardening of his muscles, and how he managed to find the time to read as widely as he did was a puzzle to me. He was helped very greatly by his wife, Mary

Pickford, who did not look a day older than when she appeared in her first picture, and worked as hard as he did. It was by no means an easy life for either of them, or one free from anxiety. The fickleness of the public hung like the sword of Damocles over both their heads, but they did not intend to let it fall through any fault of theirs. They were blissfully happy together and as much in love as turtle doves.

As for Charles Spencer Chaplin, with the flapping feet and comic moustache, doomed to be funny at all costs, he struck me then as a man who had long grown out of his ragged trousers, but was without sufficient self-confidence to develop the genuine tragic gifts that belong to every great comedian. Shy as a seagull and, like Douglas Fairbanks, without a swollen head, it seemed to me that he only needed the right encouragement and the right story to enable him to break away from the easy stuff that he was doing, and which he had been content to do to the infinite amusement of all the peoples to whom his name is a household word, since his earliest years upon the vaudeville stage in England and America, to prove himself an actor of the utmost sympathy and charm, with a power to draw tears as well as laughter and stir the deeper emotions of an audience that is far more eager than he seems to think to go up with a man

to the highest point of his capacity. I would like to see him play "Richard II" for instance, and I am sure that he would have brought Mark Sabre to life in "If Winter Comes" with electrical effect. But of all the parts that he is capable of playing as it has never been played before, Peter Pan is the one. I wish he would take his courage in both hands and ask J. M. Barrie to let him put that play upon the screen.

III.

I found it a little difficult to settle down to the humdrum of a practical life in New York after those two months among so much intense emotion and phantasy. It had to be done, however, and during the ensuing months that followed each other with such fearful rapidity I returned to my old familiar occupation. A somewhat appalled glance at my book shelves shows me that, since then, I have added "Who Cares", "The Blue Room", "The Rustle of Silk" and "Another Scandal" to my now lengthening list of books, and "The Silver Fox", "Danger" and "The New Poor" to the list of my plays. In the four books I carried out John Buchan's urgent plea for stories and avoided the temptation to which so many authors have succumbed of looking at life through the yellow glasses of Freud. Serialized in the

THE COTTAGE ON THE HILL.

magazine in which W. J. Locke and I have been in the habit of following upon each other's heels, they were, of course, written a year before their publication in book form. In the case of "The Rustle of Silk", which was built against a background of English politics, I came up against a series of snags by having to take on the uneasy robes of a prophet and anticipate dramatic changes in Downing Street and the House of Commons which were purely in the nature of guesswork. To the infinite scorn and derision of some of my political friends I turned Lloyd George, Lord Birkenhead, Winston Churchill, Austin Chamberlain and company out of the great game a year before England performed that most admirable deed and committed myself to the return at the next General Election of a Conservative party which would have a good working majority. I anticipated, also, the King's letter on the Irish question when I put into the mouth of Lady Feo, the wife of the Home Secretary in the Coalition Government, the following words : "I said that I thought that this was the psychological moment for a nice piece of theatricality. I said that someone, probably Kipling, should draft a letter for the King, in which he should set forth the fact that he was going to withdraw every one of his soldiers and all his officials from Ireland at once and leave the Irish to run

themselves, giving them the same kind of dominion government that they have in Australia and Canada, wishing them Godspeed and a happy Easter, — a manly, colloquial letter, very simple and direct, and ending with a touch of real emotion, the sort of thing that the King would write on his own, better than anyone." When this happened, and when Lloyd George and his "gang" came in not at the head of the poll, as they were so certain of doing, but far back among the also rans, with Winston Churchill and others sprawling in the water jump, I shared the feelings of Old Moore, if there is such a person, when his predictions in his famous Almanac came off by the luckiest of chances. But the rôle of prophet is a dangerous one to play, as Hilaire Belloc and Colonel Repington know so well, and I shall do my best not to don the robes again. It was a little startling to read in a castigation given to me by one of the well-known book critics for "dragging politics into this preposterous story" that "Hamilton proves his utter ignorance of the situation in England since, as all the world knows, the little Welshman has just received the overwhelming endorsement of British voters and been returned to Downing Street with an enormous majority." I could only think that like the gentleman who saw my novel "The Outpost of Eternity" as "The Bedposts of Maternity", and reviewed it

from this domestic point of view, this writer stood in need of the immediate advice of an oculist.

Of the play "Danger", whose original title was "The Mother Woman", I can trust myself to say very little because almost everything connected with its production brings back memories of quarrels, litigation and advertising that are a nightmare to me. There is always, luckily, a certain amount of humour even in the most humiliating episodes and in this case it was provided by the fact that the man who produced the play never for a single instant knew what it was about. Every day he discovered that it meant something that he had not seen in it the day before and was perfectly certain that it didn't mean the day after. During the most distressing rehearsals he demanded the injection into the play of nearly everything that he had seen in every other play over a period of twenty years, and several things that could not be put into any play without the interference of the police. An unpleasant time was had by all. Finally one of the leading actors became utterly bewildered, as well he might, and after a perfectly natural temperamental outburst, said: "Well, there's something the matter with this so and so act. What is it?" "The acting," I answered, and the conversation came to an abrupt full stop.

The adventures of "The Silver Fox", on the other hand, are not without interest and amusement, though, like those of every play that finds its way to the footlights, causing a certain amount of pain. I had been invited to read "Der Blauer Fuchs" by Dr. Ferenc Hertzeg, a distinguished Austrian playwright, which had been a great success in Vienna. I did so reluctantly, because I hate reading plays, especially those illiterate translations that are made in the offices of foreign agents. I was so greatly attracted by an incident in this one, however, that, without the advice of my own agent, I signed a very foolish agreement to make a free adaptation of Dr. Hertzeg's piece. The adaptation was so free that when eventually the play was written the only thing in it that bore the remotest resemblance to the original manuscript was the incident to which I have referred. In the ordinary course of events the play was tried out at Washington, a long-suffering city whose inhabitants are mostly far too wise now ever to go to their theatre, and I went to see how it appealed to the handful of earnest playgoers who, in the face of continual discouragement, still persist in going to watch the half-hearted and timid experiments of many of the New York producers. They displayed a very encouraging enthusiasm at the first performance and even went so far as to call me in

front of the curtain at the end of the second act. At subsequent performances I had the theatre virtually to myself, and so was able to view the play from every angle of the house without getting into anybody's line of vision, which is invariably the case during the process of these try-outs in the various chosen places. Before the end of the week I came to the annoying conclusion that the play would not stand the very smallest chance of success in New York unless I cut out the attractive incident which alone had induced me to write it. It was as difficult and delicate an operation to perform as that of shortening a nose or removing a birthmark. As soon as the play was out of hospital and feeling better it was put into rehearsal again, this time in the sunny garden of William Faversham's country house with a company consisting of Lawrence Grossmith, Violet Kemble Cooper, Vivienne Osborne, Ian Keith and the great star himself. The rehearsals were airy and delightful in those charming surroundings, and would have been useful and efficient as well if Faversham, who directed the play, had understood something of its idea or realized anything of the psychology of the character that he had undertaken to portray. In spite of these rather severe handicaps, however, the rehearsals were very pleasant, friendly, and smooth. The weather was

beautiful, the view inspiring, the nearby golf-course, on which Grossmith and I spent every available moment, most sporting, and the numerous dinner parties in the hospitable Huntington houses very enjoyable indeed. On its way to New York a *répétition générale* was given in the local picture house before a friendly audience from all parts of Long Island, and then the piece was tried out for a second time in a theatre so immense and hollow that only those people who sat in the front few rows of seats were able to hear a single word of the dialogue. It was, in altogether the wrong way, an amusing experience to sit in the last row of that fantastic building, at least three quarters of a mile from the stage, and watch the actors walking through the play in imitation of the deaf and dumb. It might have been a moving-picture or a pantomime for all I, and the people round me, knew. All the same, difficult as it may be to believe, that was a popular theatre in which to try out a play and many had already that season gone through the agony and the complete waste of time to which "The Silver Fox" was put there, though the others got away without having their scenery ruined, as ours was, by a heavy rain storm that found many gaps in the roof. But that is the system under which plays are produced in this country and to kick against the pricks is only to hurt one's foot.

The play made its bow to the New York public, two months too early in the season, at the Thirty-ninth Street Theatre, was received with great kindness and cordiality by the critics and ran for several months. It was played to perfection by every member of the cast except the star who, fine actor and excellent fellow as he is, continued to misunderstand, and naturally had grown to dislike, his part. This was, of course, a little trying for all concerned. The adventures of "The Silver Fox" were by no means over with the end of its run in New York. In fact they then entered another and far more exciting phase. Having rewritten the last act, which had gone headlong into sentiment, and made it conform to the satirical mood of the first and second, I had the temerity to believe that it would appeal to the playgoers of Chicago. I had, and have, an immense faith in Chicago. I was totally unable to persuade the play's owners to share my belief, however, and so, in a moment of blazing and expensive rashness, I decided to take it over and send it there myself. As William Faversham had gone into a revival of "The Squaw Man", Ian Keith and Vivienne Osborne into other engagements, I engaged Percy Marmont, Boots Wooster and Noel Tearle to take their places and, having the good fortune to retain the invaluable services of Lawrence Grossmith and

Violet Kemble Cooper, went into further rehearsals before starting off on the road to Chicago on a commonwealth basis. As there was no theatre available in the Windy City for several weeks it was necessary for us to kill time and lose money in four towns in which the old-fashioned legitimate theatres had been put out of business long before by huge "movie" palaces. The critics of the newspapers in these places liked us very much but neither their enthusiasm nor ours was enough to turn the stream away from the new and palatial picture houses to the dusty old theatres on the dried-up banks of the diverted rivers of these flourishing cities. In something like desperation and with a greatly depleted bank account I flung myself into Chicago a week before the play was due to open there with the laudable object of making "The Silver Fox" an animal of general interest and curiosity. That was a week that I shall never forget. Arriving on Monday at the Blackstone Hotel I found, to my great surprise and delight, that the overwhelmingly hospitable people of Chicago and its eager press remembered me as the author of "The Blindness of Virtue" and "Scandal", to both of which they had given long and remunerative support. I was immediately interviewed on every conceivable subject from flappers to Lloyd George and immersed in invitations to

speak at a number of the clubs and institutions for which Chicago is so famous. From morning until night during the whole course of that strenuous week I spoke and spoke, sat with judges on their benches and wrote special articles on the results of my observation; breakfasted, lunched and dined with groups of people who were, as Chicago always is, vitally interested in books, plays, and sociology, and when, on the Saturday night, I was told that the house was sold out for the opening performance and that someone had been heard to say that "the two outstanding facts in Chicago were the Woolworth Building and Cosmo Hamilton" I broke in half and slept. All this would have gone for nothing, however, except to provide me with grateful memories of the kindness of the press and the cordiality of the people, if the play had not been liked. It was liked, and so was the company, especially Lawrence Grossmith and Violet Kemble Cooper, both of whom greatly enhanced their reputations by their very fine and polished work. The critics were, in fact, enthusiastic beyond all my hopes, and in spite of the exorbitant rent of a theatre better suited to musical comedy in which we had been placed, and the subsequent *crise de nerf* of one of the members of the company which had the effect of disturbing the happiness and peace of other members so that it became necessary for me to

bring the adventure to an abrupt termination, the dangerous experiment was far from being a hopeless failure although it ended in financial loss. When Grossmith went to Australia to play the leading part in another adventure, that of Captain Applejack, and did not succeed in bringing it off, I sent him "The Silver Fox" in answer to an urgent cable and enjoyed the satisfaction of putting him into the highest favour of the audiences in Australia and New Zealand. "One thorn of experience is worth a whole wilderness of warning," said the amiable Lowell, and with this sage remark I am now in such entire agreement that I do not intend to prick my fingers in this particular way again. I reserve the right to do so in other ways, of course.

IV.

On the voyage home in 1922 aboard the *Aquitania* there were three passengers of extreme interest to that floating and over-luxurious City. The first was Lady Astor, the second William Randolph Hearst, the third the Duncan Sisters. Lady Astor was returning to England with her admiring husband after a visit to the home of her childhood during which everything that she had said and done, and many things that she hadn't, had been rapturously reported in every newspaper in America. She was, of course, very tired after so nerve-

wracking an experience, which included speech-making, interview giving and photograph posing, and remained in the fastnesses of her suite to rest until persuaded to take the chair at the concert in aid of the orphans and dependents of the gallant men who go down to the sea in ships. The announcement of her appearance drew everyone to the drawing-room, in which there were as many standees as there used to be at the Metropolitan Opera House on a Caruso night. The romance that attached to her as the first woman to storm and cajole her way into the House of Commons, and as the wife of a man who had become an English Peer while bearing one of the best-known names in America, was altogether irresistible. Added to this was the reputation that she had won of fearlessness and wit, and her extraordinary gift, shared only by Lloyd George, Will Rogers, Bernard Shaw and William Collier, for quick back-answers. Because she had been snapshotted in every pose and attitude by the invincible and relentless press photographers, and pictures of her with all her children had become extremely familiar, there was a gasp of surprise when she was escorted to the table by the purser, looking so young, so beautiful and so charming. The nice simplicity of her frock and the fact that she wore no jewels was, however, a matter of disappointment and amazement to one

member of that audience, a large lady clothed with obvious expense and wearing a string of pearls as large as thrushes' eggs the cost of which would have placed an enormous tract of suffering Europe out of the possibility of famine. I watched the fall of her face as Lady Astor passed with energy and grace, and heard, as did many others, this caustic and disapproving remark: "Say, *she* ain't no swell dresser!"

No one who studied Lady Astor through that evening, was swayed into sudden laughter by her quick sallies and delightful badinage, kept on the *qui vive* by her agile and darting brain, and finally seduced into handing out dollars by her irresistible wheedling, could have failed to realise how easy it must have been for her to carry her constituents to the poll and wear down the prejudice of old Parliamentary hands in a House which had been sacrosanct before her entry. The whole performance was a masterpiece from beginning to end, conducted with a sprightliness, a speed, an enchantment and a cool cheek quite impossible to describe.

William Randolph Hearst, with Mrs. Hearst, several sons and two or three friends, was going to London to have breakfast with Lloyd George, renew his acquaintance with English society and politics, and stand by before making a tour of

Europe while his wife was presented at Court. He too clung to the retirement of his staterooms, and only appeared when the ship moved slowly through the lovely Southampton waters under a gorgeous sunset to ooze her way into dock. Unlike the rest of the passengers, except Lady Astor, he was going to land that night and take the London train. It was while he was standing rather impatiently in the port side sun-parlour that Lady Astor marched up to him and conducted a vivid monologue which any self-respecting reporter would have given his hope of Heaven to have scooped. And all the while he stood tall, courteous, and interested, with an occasional winning smile that broke the characteristic inscrutability of his face.

As for the Duncan Sisters they gambolled like kittens all over the ship, played deck tennis with terrific energy and gusts of mirth, wore sport clothes of every colour of the rainbow, and enjoyed a holiday between a long engagement in America and one to which they were going in London to the very last inch of their capacity. Thus they were an inspiration to all beholders, and the mere sight of their yellow heads and the however distant sound of their merry voices added a tang to the sea breeze and a touch of extra warmth to the May sun. They sang generously at the concert, going nearly all the way through their deft and hilarious

programme, two vivid, healthy and unique little people, highly talented and esteemable, most kind and delightful. They pay a heavier price than most for their excellence because the demand for encores is more insistent, but they are not afraid of work, as one can see from the polish and the practised spontaneity of all their numbers. Artists, both.

It was not until I crossed on the *Homeric* in the spring of last year that I had the pleasure of meeting Colonel House, usually regarded as the mystery man of international politics, the unofficial hush Ambassador to England from America and to America from England, with a permanent pass into the Quai d'Orsay. I was introduced to him, one ought perhaps to say presented, by Harris Brown, the portrait painter, and found in him a man of great charm, dry humour, calm wisdom, judicial outlook, with a deep knowledge of the European situation, — and the gift of reticence. During our several walks on the deck together he expressed so great a concern as to how I was going to dramatize "The Rustle of Silk" that it was impossible for him to be pumped on the many subjects in which he knew that I was far more interested. He had a genius for throwing up a smoke screen behind which he withdrew most gracefully from the machine gun of indiscreet questioning, but was startlingly frank about things that didn't

matter in the least. One instinctively clicked heels to him as to a commanding officer because of the instant recognition in him of a leader. I have only met three other men who inspired this sense — Lord Balfour, Colonel Roosevelt and Lord Roberts. Quiet, suave, gentle, kind and unobtrusive, — Colonel Mouse, as someone called him — his extraordinarily small hand seemed quite capable at the right moment of taking an iron grip.

By a great stroke of luck Josef Hofmann was also on the *Homeric* on this voyage, and when, one afternoon, he consented to give a recital for the orphans' fund he laid the passengers under a deep debt of gratitude. Without any of the temperamental manners that are sometimes acquired by great musicians he possessed himself of a piano that could not be, under the circumstances, as good as those upon which he was in the habit of playing, and, for an hour and a half, went from piece to piece, from encore to encore, with that quiet and unaffected power and mastery that are peculiar to himself. A short man, rather grey, with a face as unlined as that of a boy, and a slightly turned-up nose that gives him a rather mischievous expression, he sat a little bent forward over his instrument and untwisted "all the chains that tie the hidden soul of harmony." And as he played and played, going from one exquisite composition to

another, he proved again the truth of Addison's contention in "A Song for St. Cecelia's Day" as it is his wont to do :

> "Music religious heat inspires,
> It wakes the soul and lifts it high,
> And wings it with sublime desires
> And fits it to bespeak the Deity."

I cannot bring these rambling reminiscences to an end without a most grateful reference to the invariable kindness that I have always received in the United States of America. Not only is my better half an American but so are half my friends. For these reasons, and for the one, so vitally necessary, which must play an important part in the future of the world, it behooves a loyal Englishman who spends much time in America, as I do, to leave no stone unturned in an endeavour to cement the everlasting friendship between the two countries, which, after all, are divided by nothing more difficult to navigate than much water, many old prejudices, and several misunderstandings. This I shall try always to do, hoping that the time will not be far away before a closer union will be brought about between America and Great Britain which nothing may ever break and which shall stand as an immovable bulwark between the temperamental outbursts of the other countries of the earth.

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